NARUTO

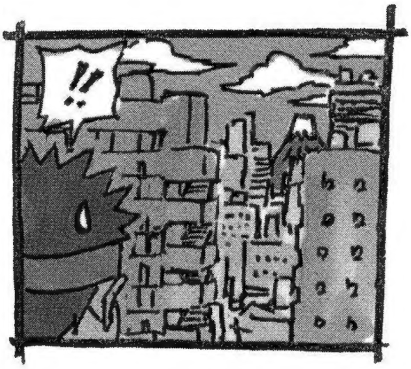
SHONEN JUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto

volume

23

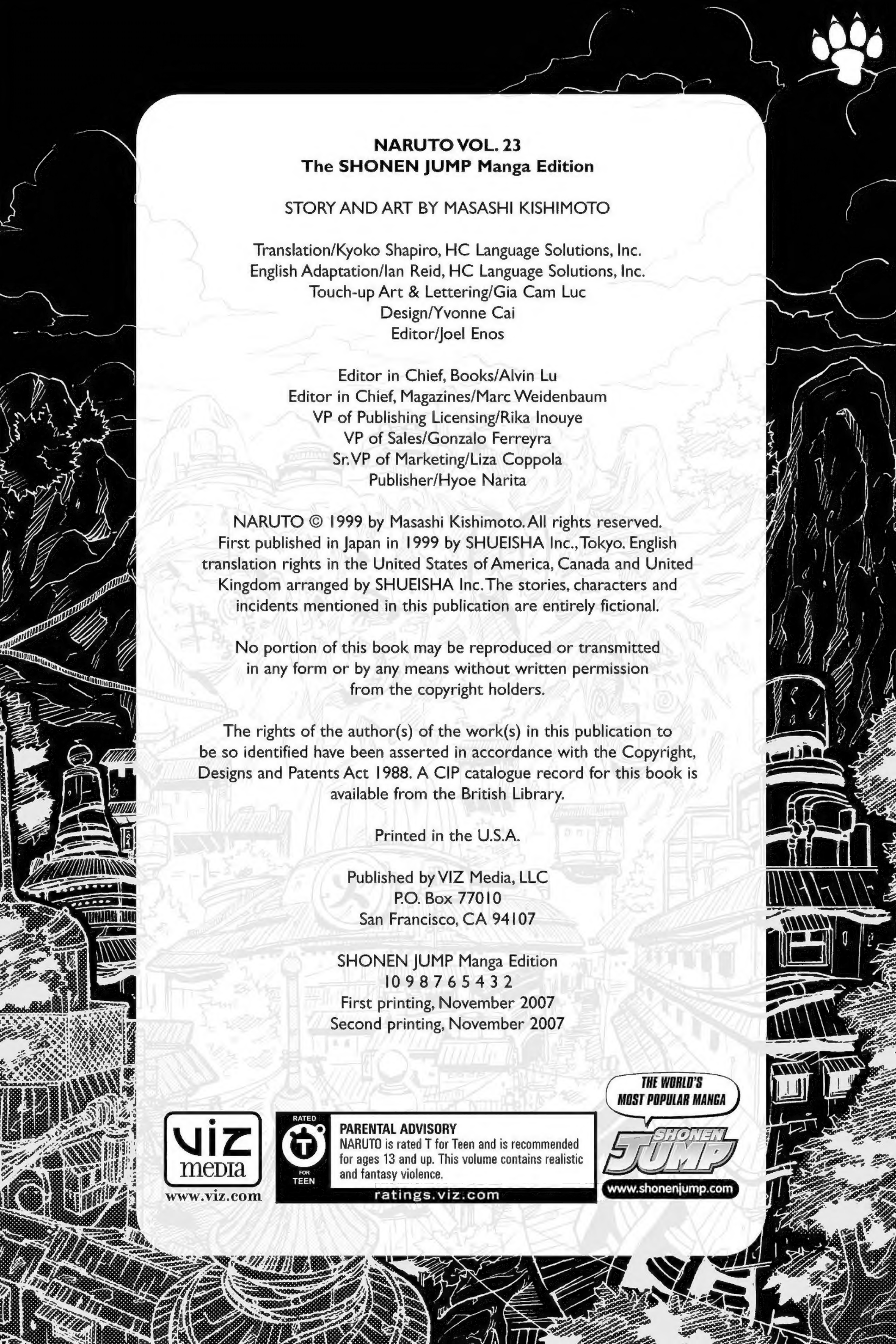


岸本斉史

It's been a year since I moved into my current apartment and I just recently realized something... I can see Mt. Fuji from my porch. It took me this long to notice!

—Masashi Kishimoto, 2004

Author/artist Masashi Kishimoto was born in 1974 in rural Okayama Prefecture, Japan. After spending time in art college, he won the Hop Step Award for new manga artists with his manga **Karakuri** (Mechanism). Kishimoto decided to base his next story on traditional Japanese culture. His first version of **Naruto**, drawn in 1997, was a one-shot story about fox spirits; his final version, which debuted in **Weekly Shonen Jump** in 1999, quickly became the most popular ninja manga in Japan.



NARUTO VOL. 23
The SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition

STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

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RATED T FOR TEEN

PARENTAL ADVISORY
NARUTO is rated T for Teen and is recommended for ages 13 and up. This volume contains realistic and fantasy violence.
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SHONEN JUMP
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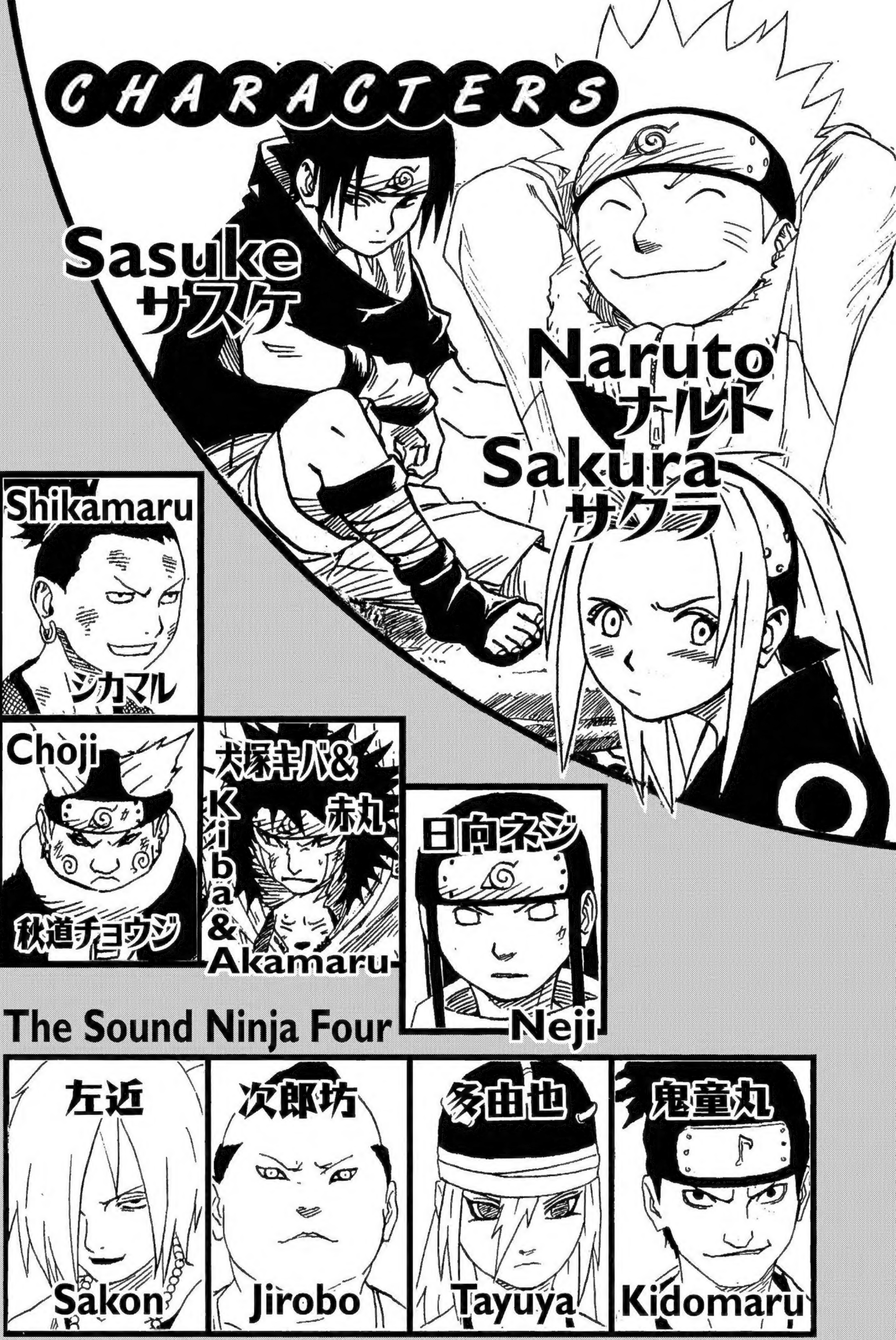
SHONEN JUMP MANGA EDITION

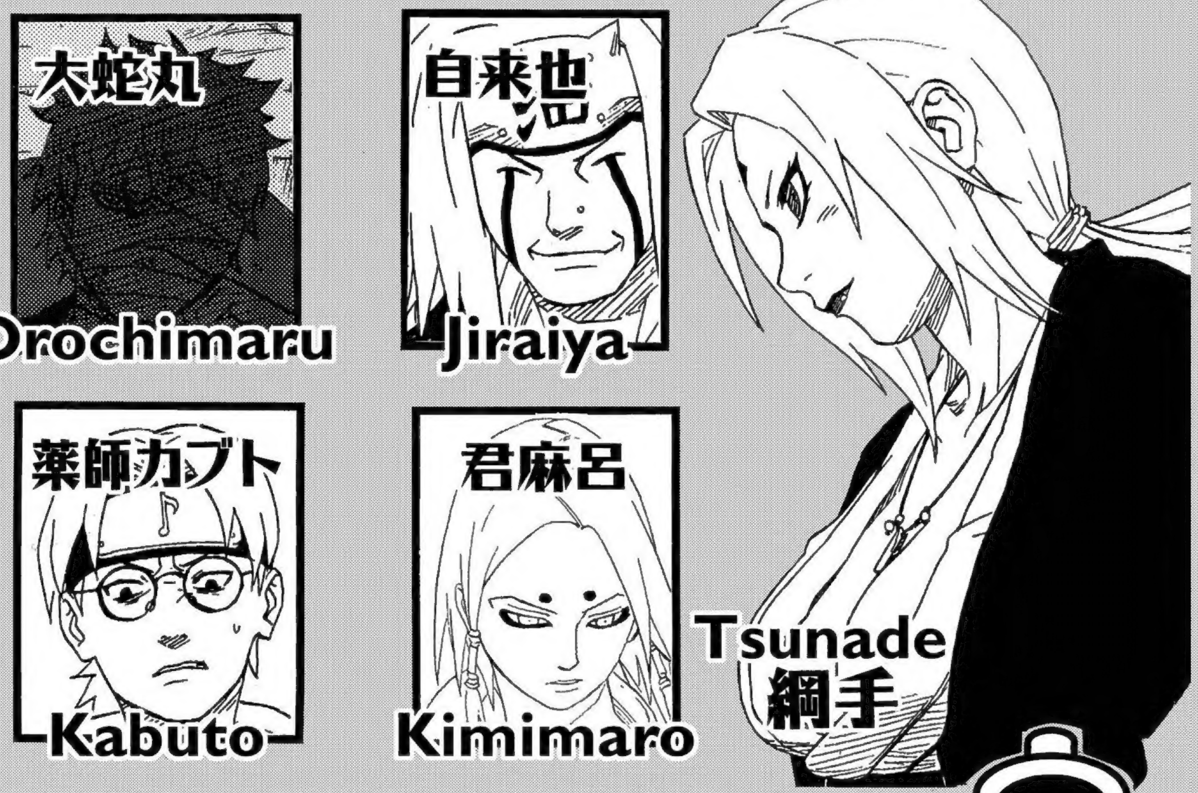
NARUTO

VOL. 23

PREDICAMENT

STORY AND ART BY
MASASHI KISHIMOTO


CHARACTERS
Sasuke
サスケ
Naruto
ナルト
Sakura
サクラ
Shikamaru
シカマル
Choji
秋道チョウジ
犬塚キバ&赤丸
Kiba & Akamaru
日向ネジ
Neji
The Sound Ninja Four
左近
Sakon
次郎坊
Jirobo
多由也
Tayuya
鬼童丸
Kidomaru


大蛇丸
Orochimaru
自来也
Jiraiya
薬師カブト
Kabuto
君麻呂
Kimimaro
Tsunade
綱手

The Story So Far...

Twelve years ago a destructive nine-tailed fox spirit attacked the ninja village of Konohagakure. The *Hokage*, or village champion, defeated the fox by sealing its soul into the body of a baby boy. Now that boy, Uzumaki Naruto, has grown up to be a ninja-in-training, learning the art of ninjutsu with his cellmates Sakura and Sasuke.

Naruto and company take on the Chûnin Selection Exams but suffer a sudden attack from Orochimaru in the Forest of Death. Orochimaru leaves a curse mark on Sasuke's body and vanishes, only to return during the final round to launch *Operation Destroy Konoha!* While Naruto battles Gaara, the Third Hokage falls to Orochimaru.

After the funeral, the mysterious Tsunade becomes Fifth Hokage. Sasuke flees Konohagakure with the Sound Ninja Four. Shikamaru and a cell hurry to pursue Sasuke, but Choji and then Neji are struck down by the Sound Ninja. Can Sasuke be saved from himself?!

NARUTO

VOL. 23

PREDICAMENT

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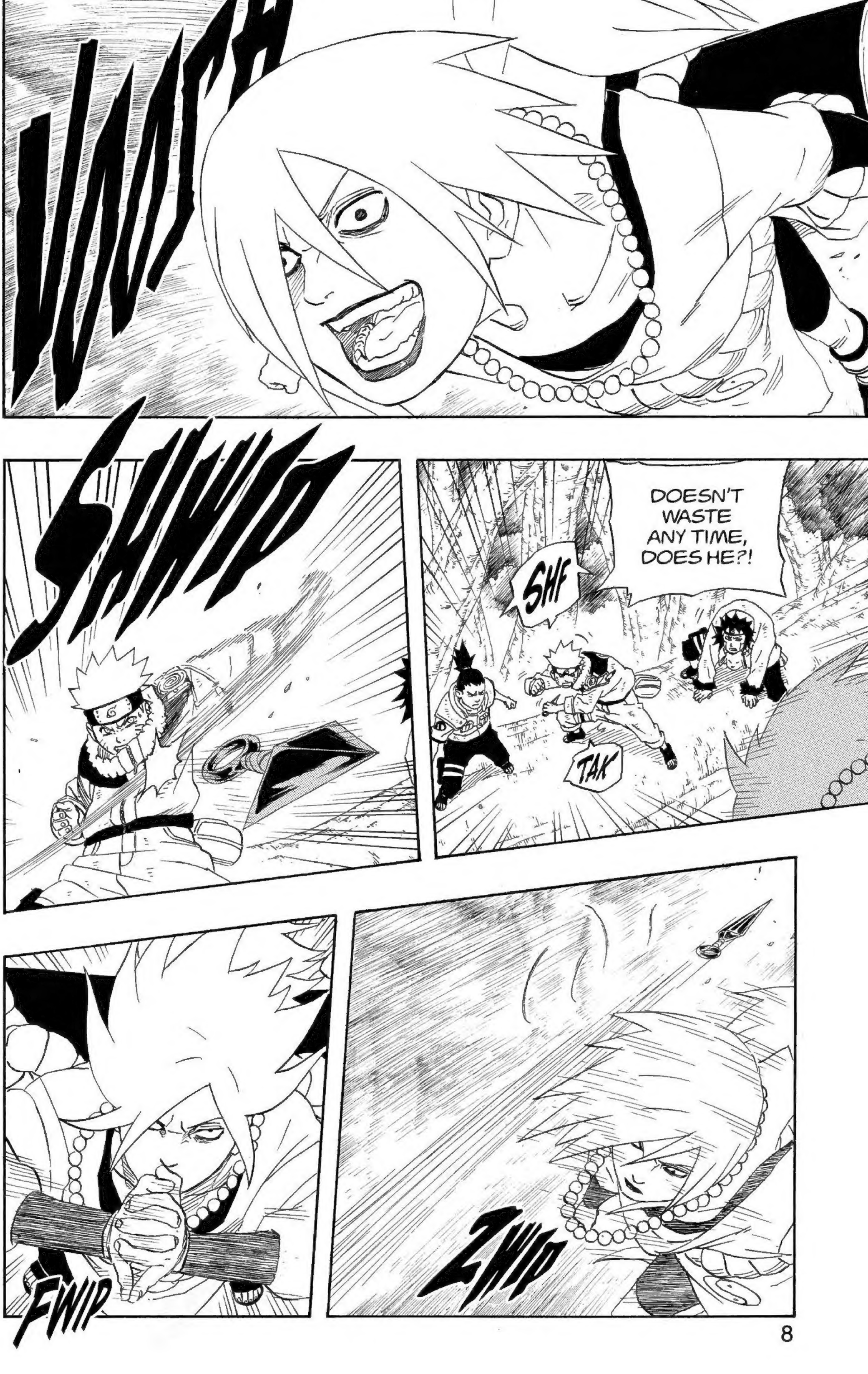
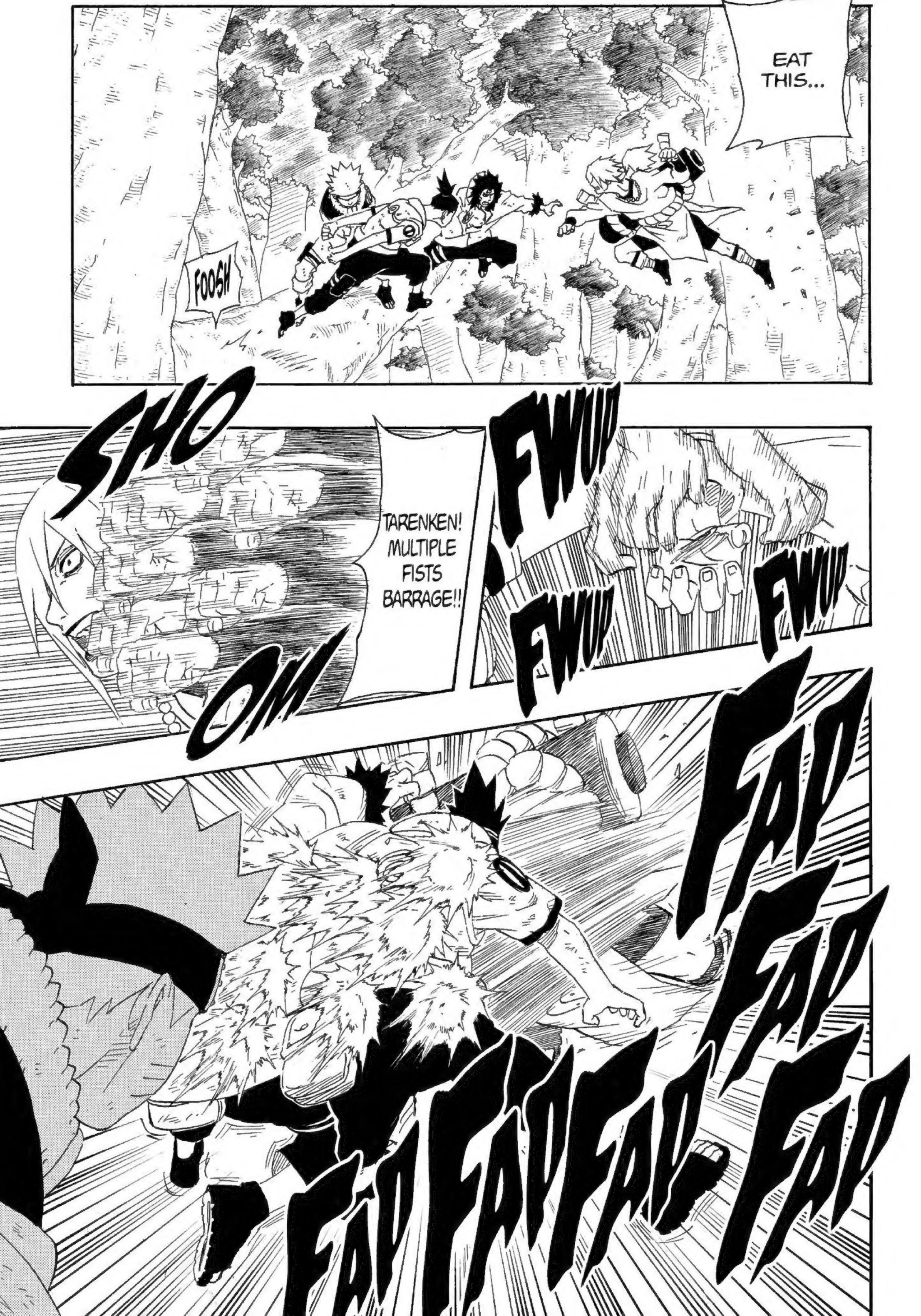
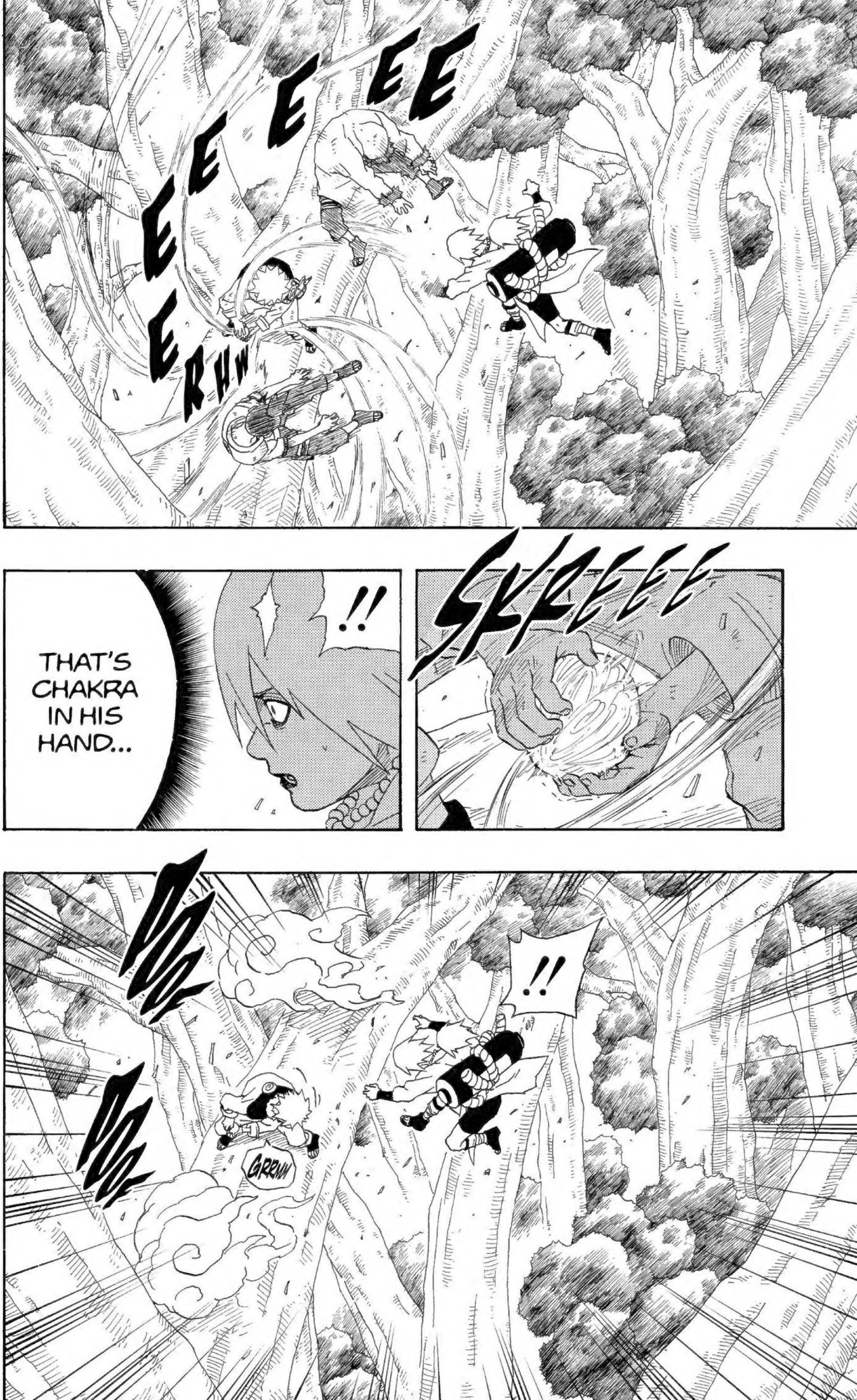
Number 200: According to Plan...!!

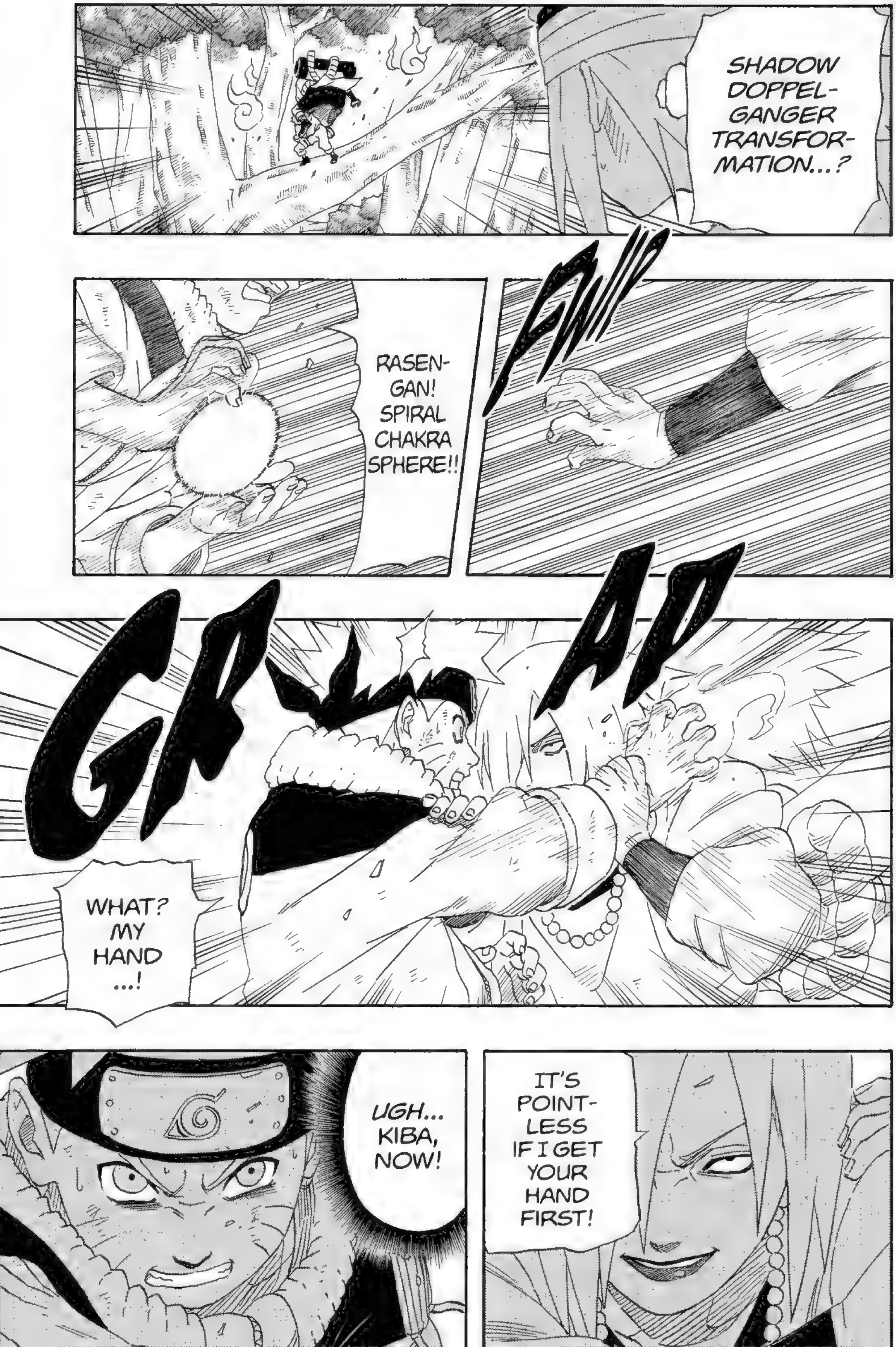

WOOSH
SHWIP
DOESN'T WASTE ANY TIME, DOES HE?!
SHF
TAK
ZWIP
FWIP

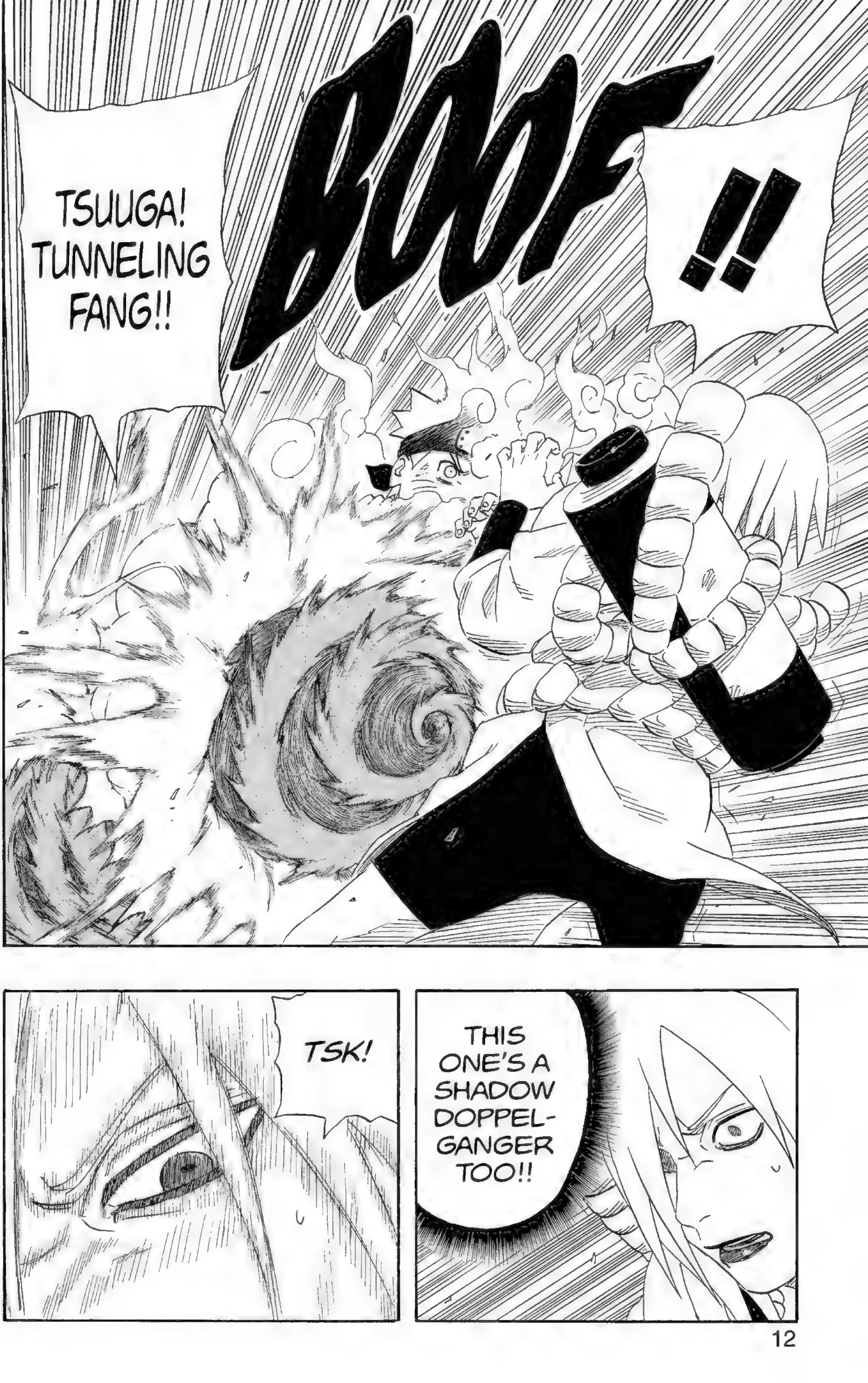
READ THIS WAY

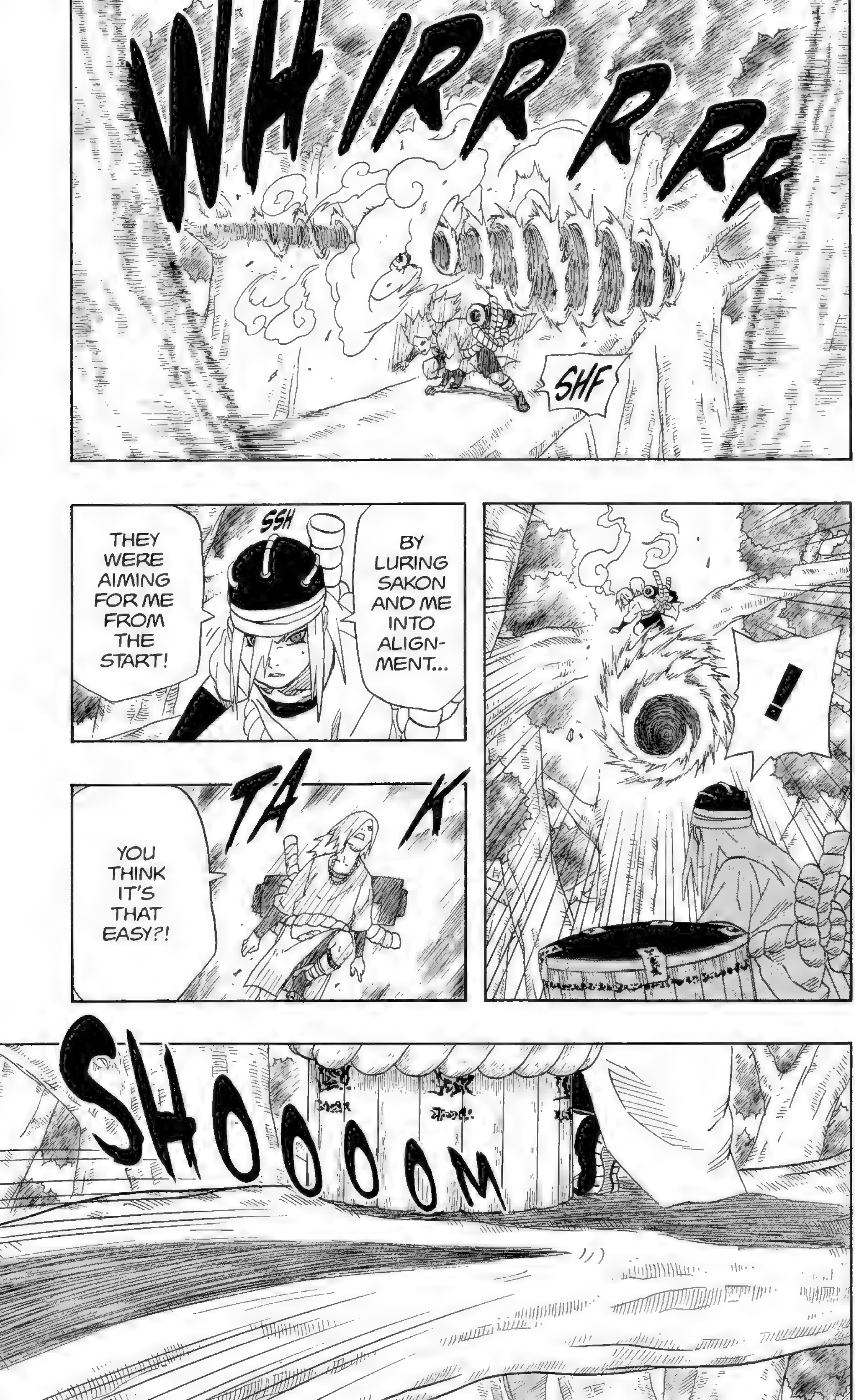

EAT THIS...
FOOSH
FWUP
FWUP
FWUP
TARENKEN! MULTIPLE FISTS BARRAGE!!
SHO
OM
FAP FAP FAP FAP FAP FAP FAP FAP

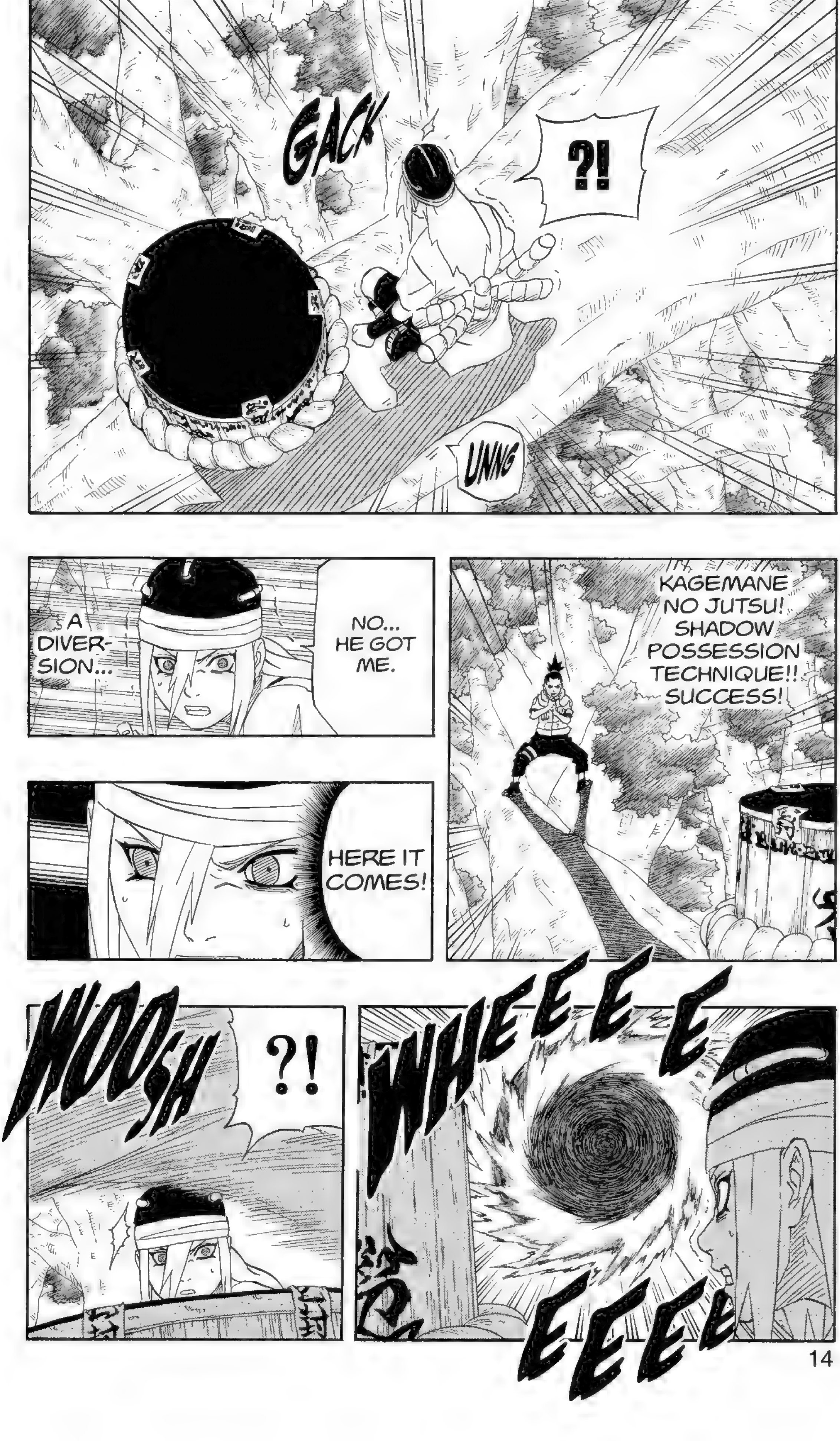

RHWEEEEEEEE
SKREEEE
!!
THAT'S CHAKRA IN HIS HAND...
!!
POOF
POOF
GRRNN

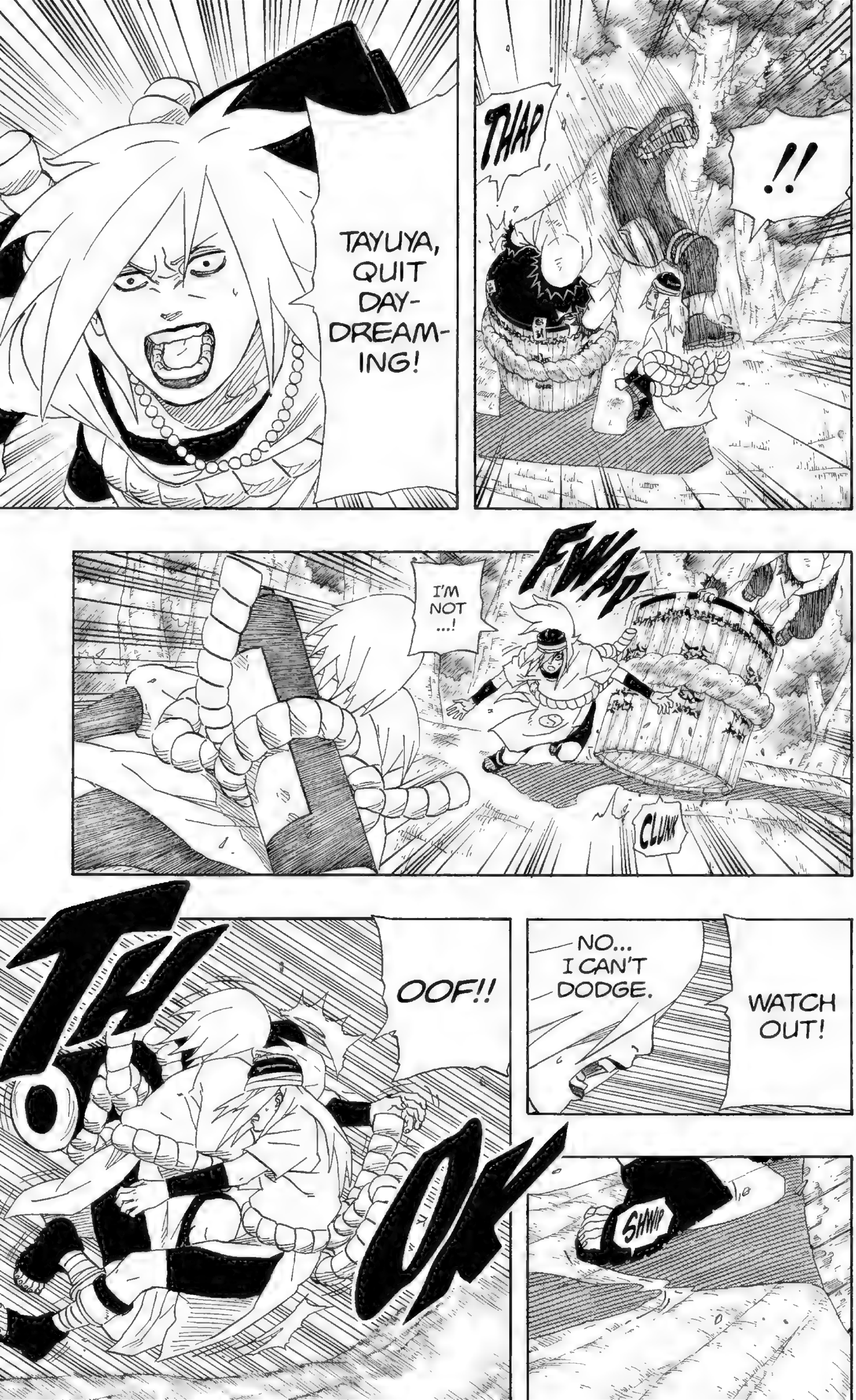
READ THIS WAY

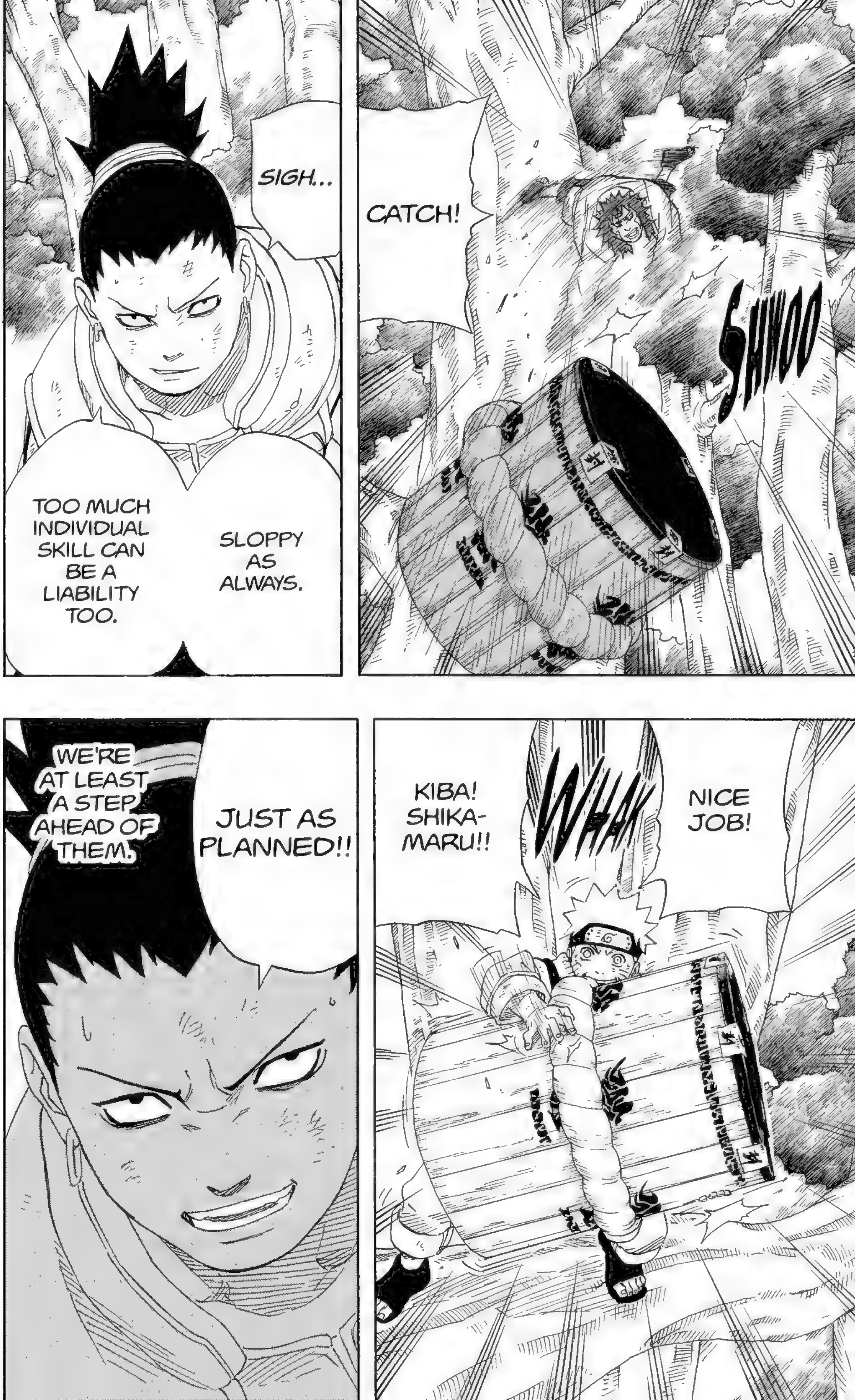

SHADOW DOPPELGANGER TRANSFORMATION...?
FWIP
RASENGAN! SPIRAL CHAKRA SPHERE!!
GRAAP
WHAT? MY HAND ...!
IT'S POINTLESS IF I GET YOUR HAND FIRST!
UGH... KIBA, NOW!


BOOF!!
TSUUGA! TUNNELING FANG!!
THIS ONE'S A SHADOW DOPPELGANGER TOO!!
TSK!

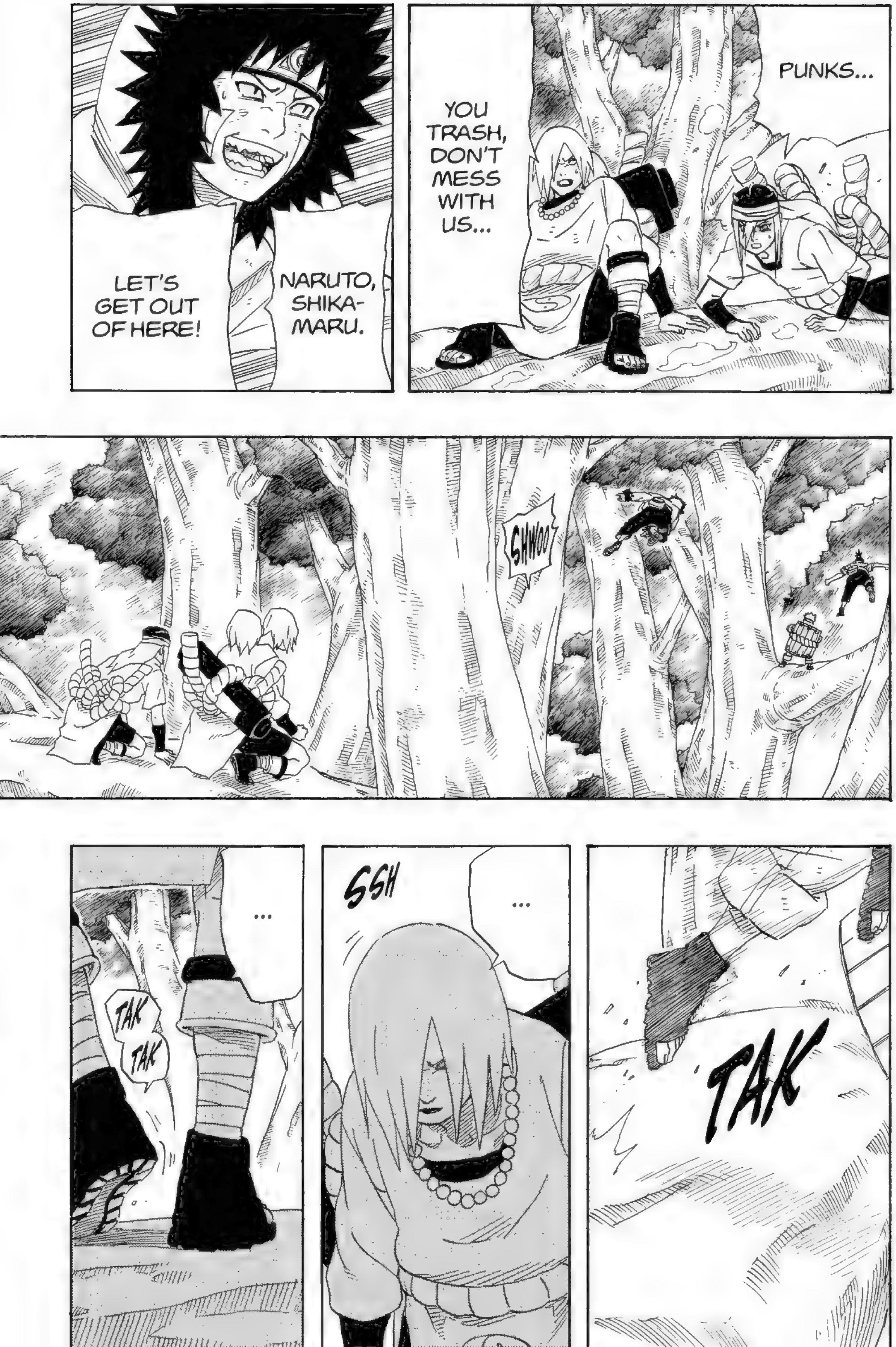

WHIRRRRK
SHF
!
BY LURING SAKON AND ME INTO ALIGNMENT...
SSH
THEY WERE AIMING FOR ME FROM THE START!
TAK
YOU THINK IT'S THAT EASY?!
SHOOOOM

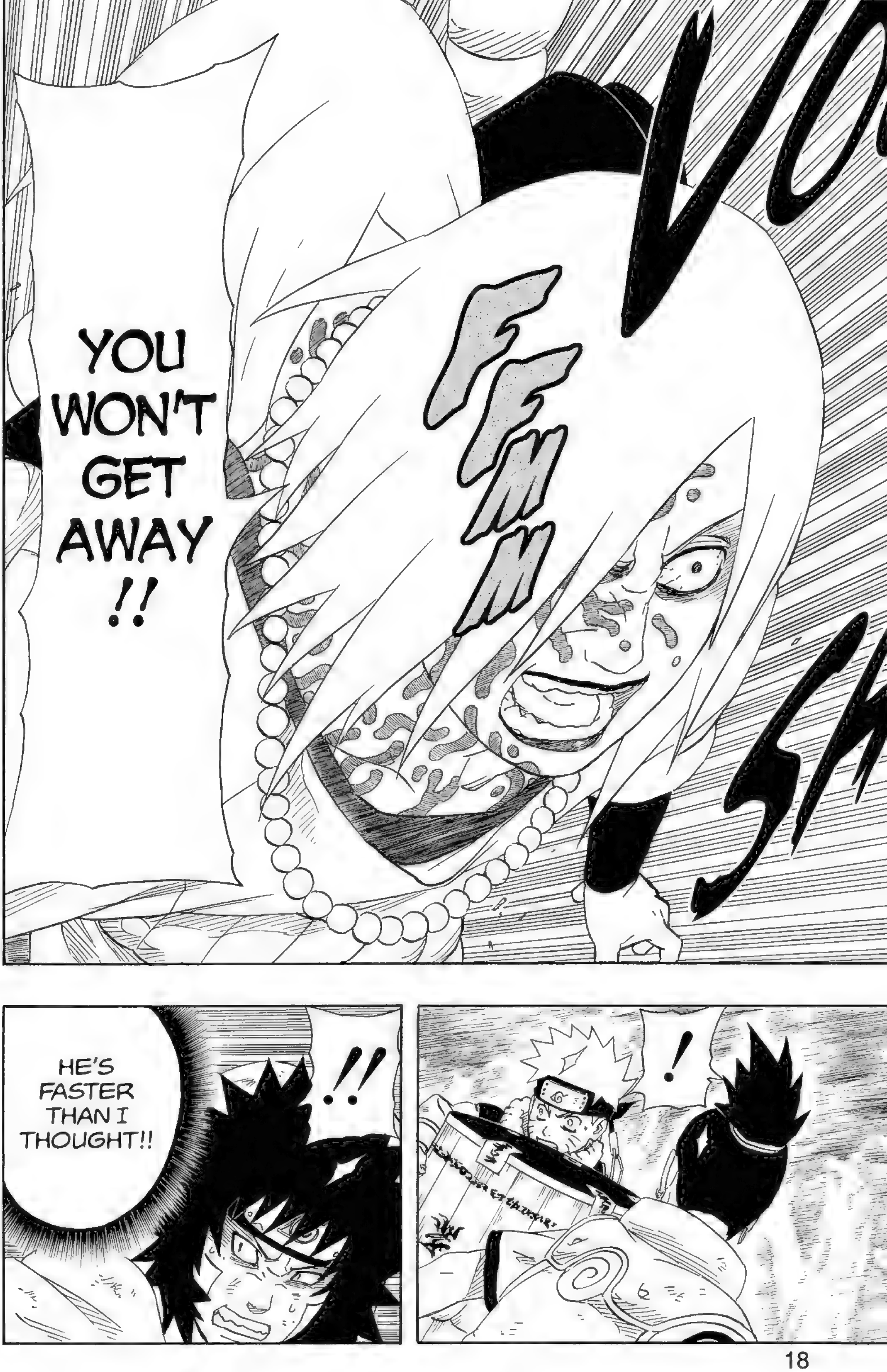

?!
GACK
UNNG
KAGEMANE NO JUTSU! SHADOW POSSESSION TECHNIQUE!! SUCCESS!
NO... HE GOT ME.
A DIVERSION...
HERE IT COMES!
WHEEEEEEEEE
?!
WHOOSH

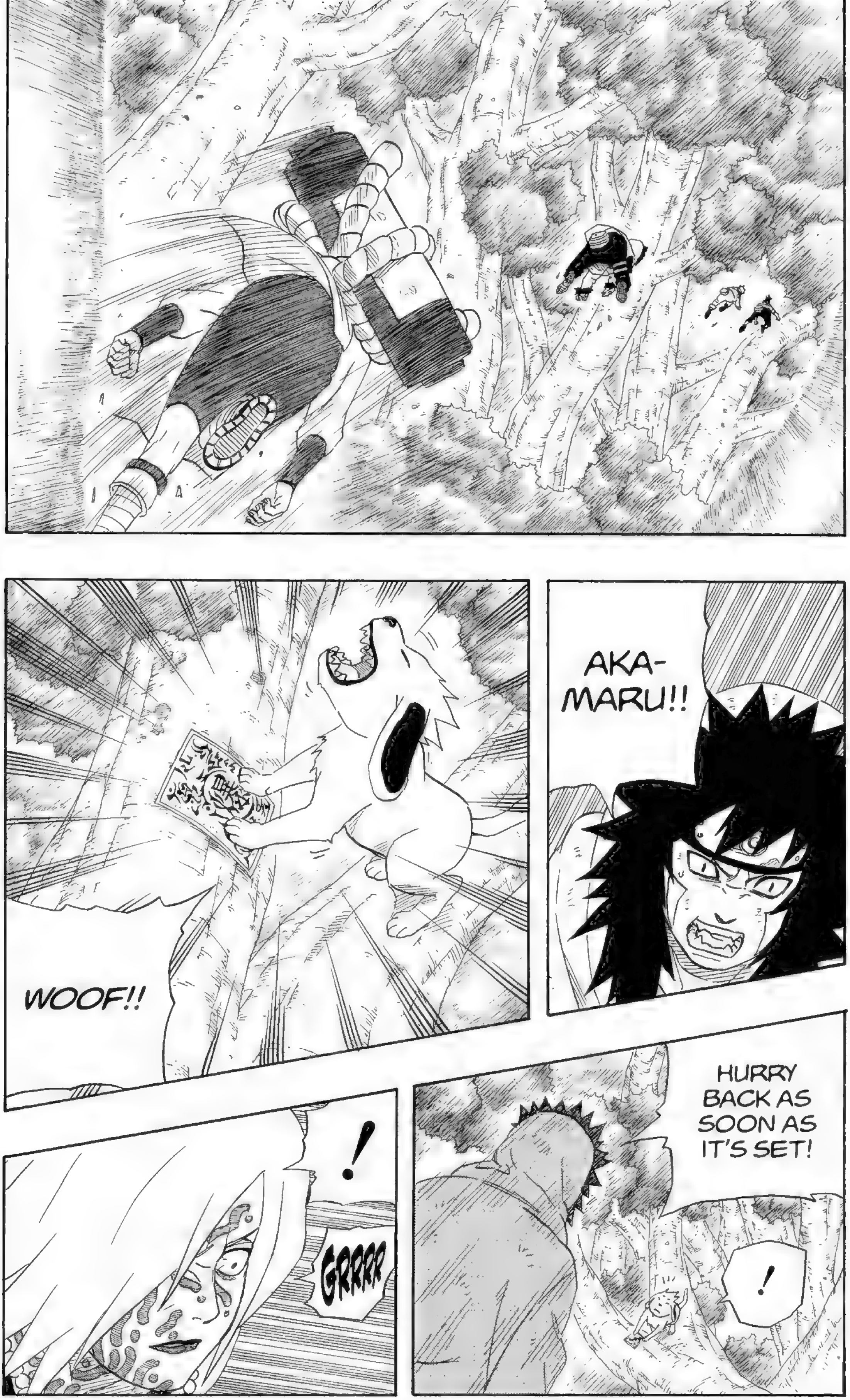

THAP
!!
TAYUYA, QUIT DAYDREAMING!
FWAP
I'M NOT ...!
CLUNK
WATCH OUT!
NO... I CAN'T DODGE.
SHWIP
OOF!!
THOK

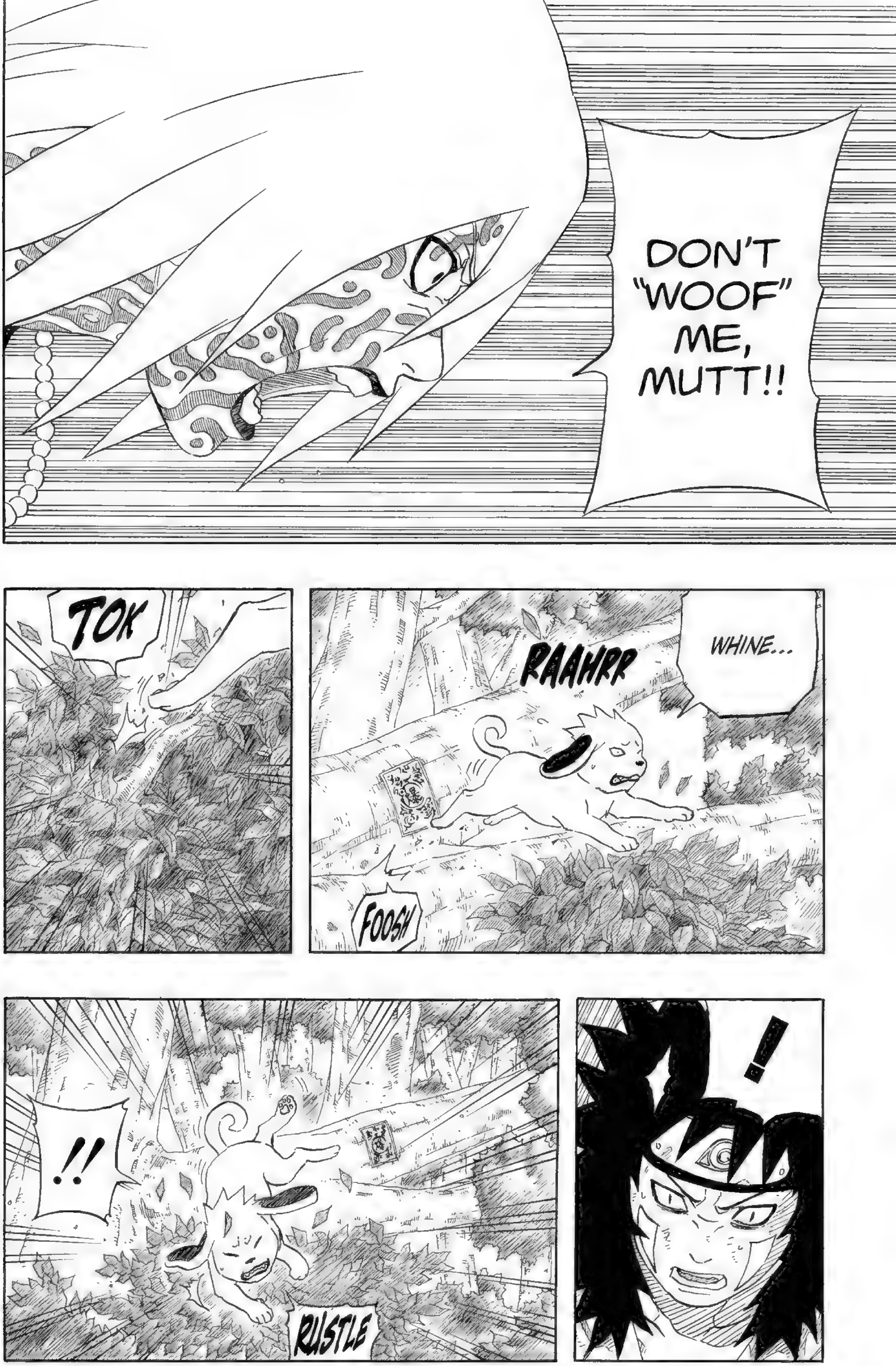

CATCH!
SHWOO
SIGH...
SLOPPY AS ALWAYS.
TOO MUCH INDIVIDUAL SKILL CAN BE A LIABILITY TOO.
NICE JOB!
WHAK
KIBA! SHIKAMARU!!
JUST AS PLANNED!!
WE'RE AT LEAST A STEP AHEAD OF THEM.

READ THIS WAY

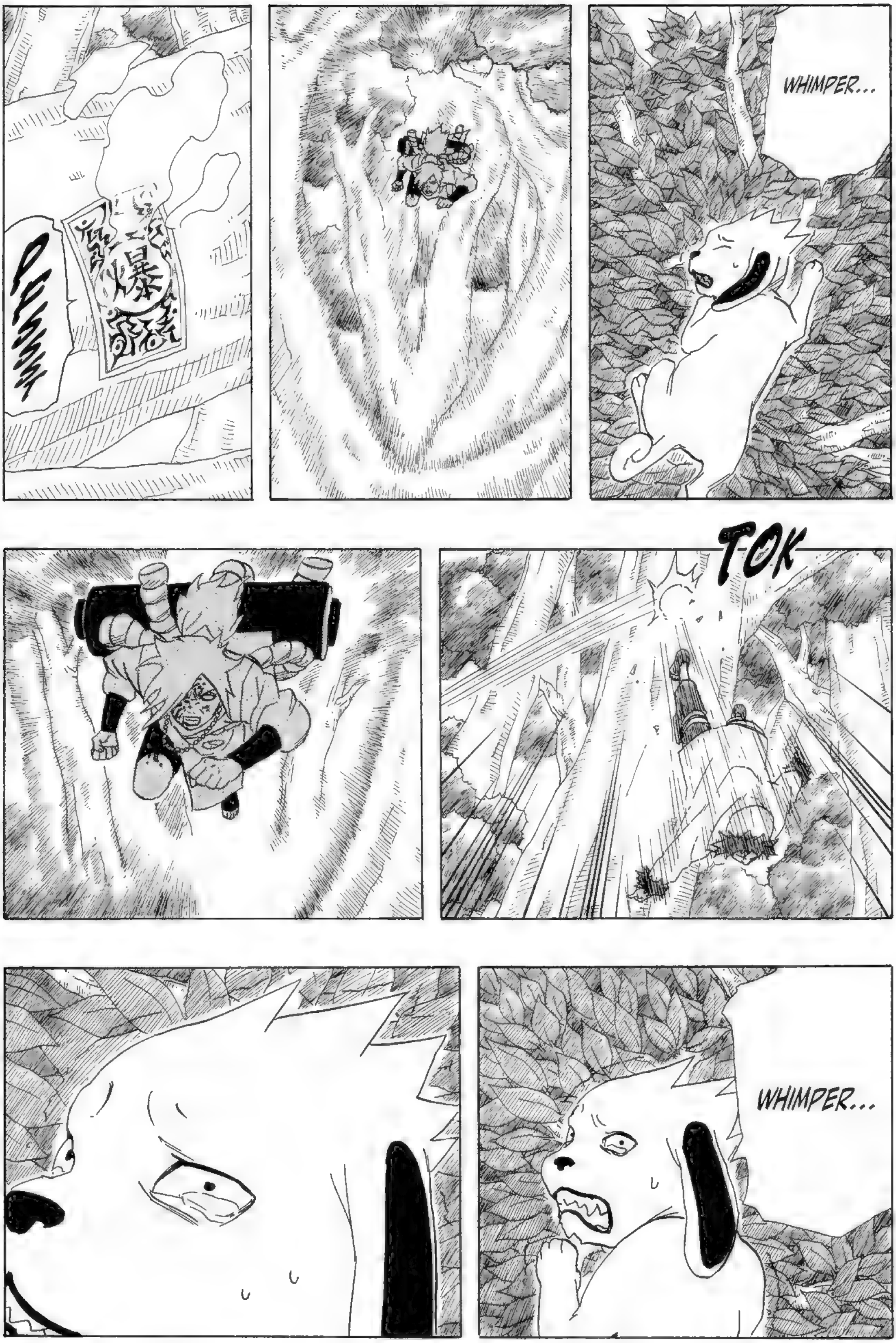

PUNKS...
YOU TRASH, DON'T MESS WITH US...
NARUTO, SHIKAMARU.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
SHWOO
TAK
SSH
...
...
TAK TAK

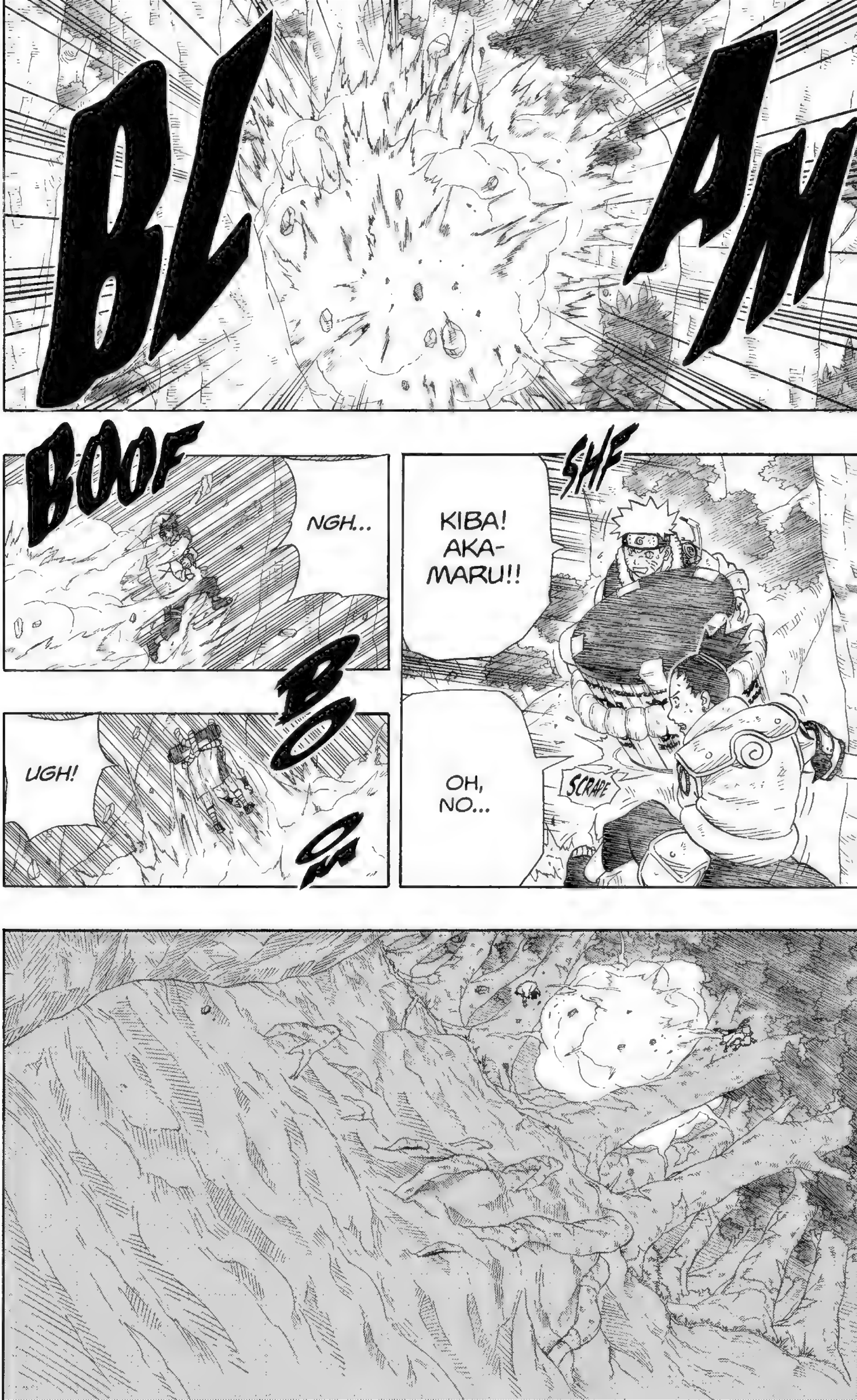

FFMM
YOU WON'T GET AWAY!!
!
!!
HE'S FASTER THAN I THOUGHT!!


AKA-MARU!!
WOOF!!
HURRY BACK AS SOON AS IT'S SET!
!
!
GRRRR

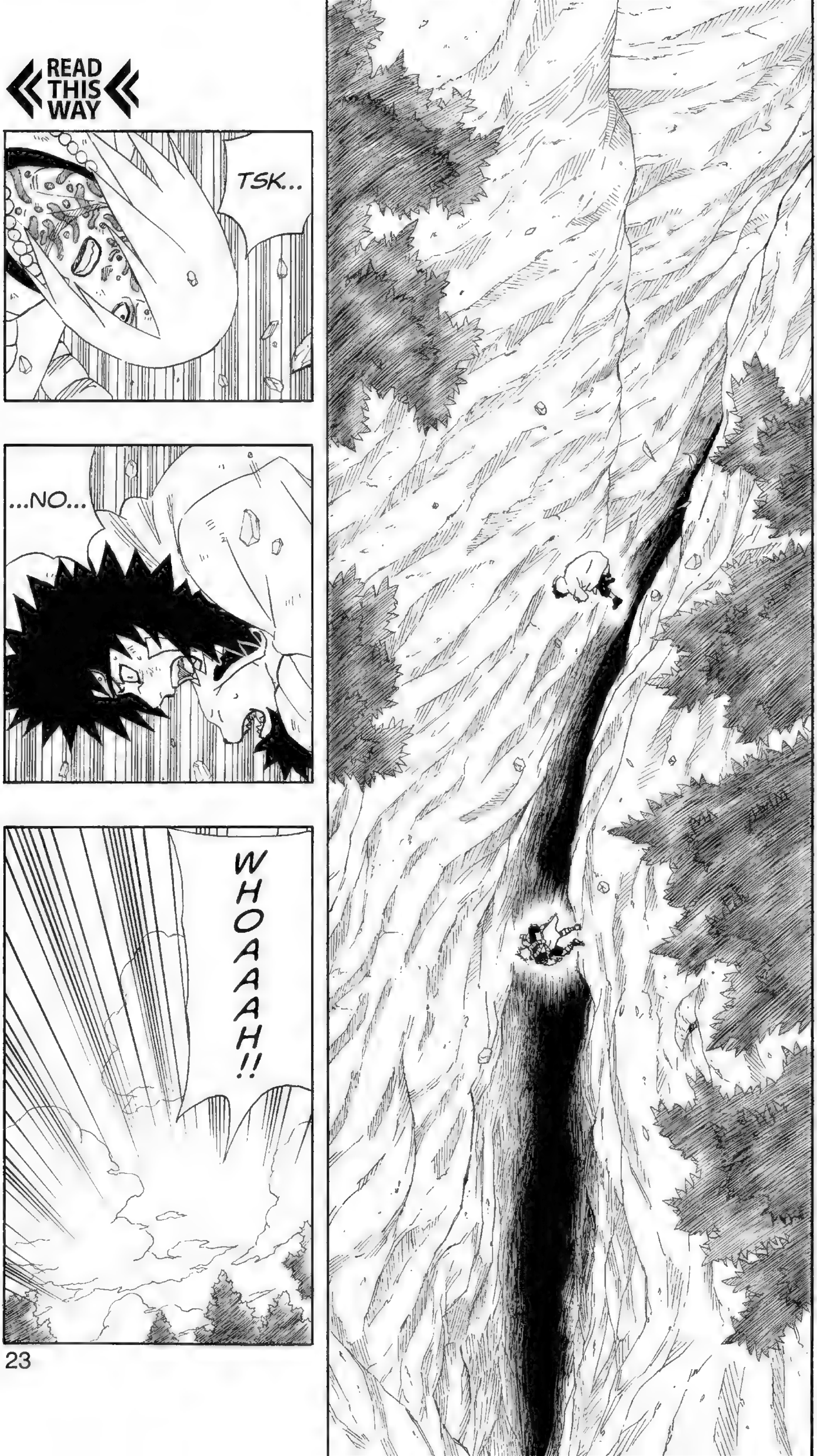

DON'T "WOOF" ME, MUTT!!
WHINE...
RAAHRR
FOOSH
TOK
!
!!
RUSTLE

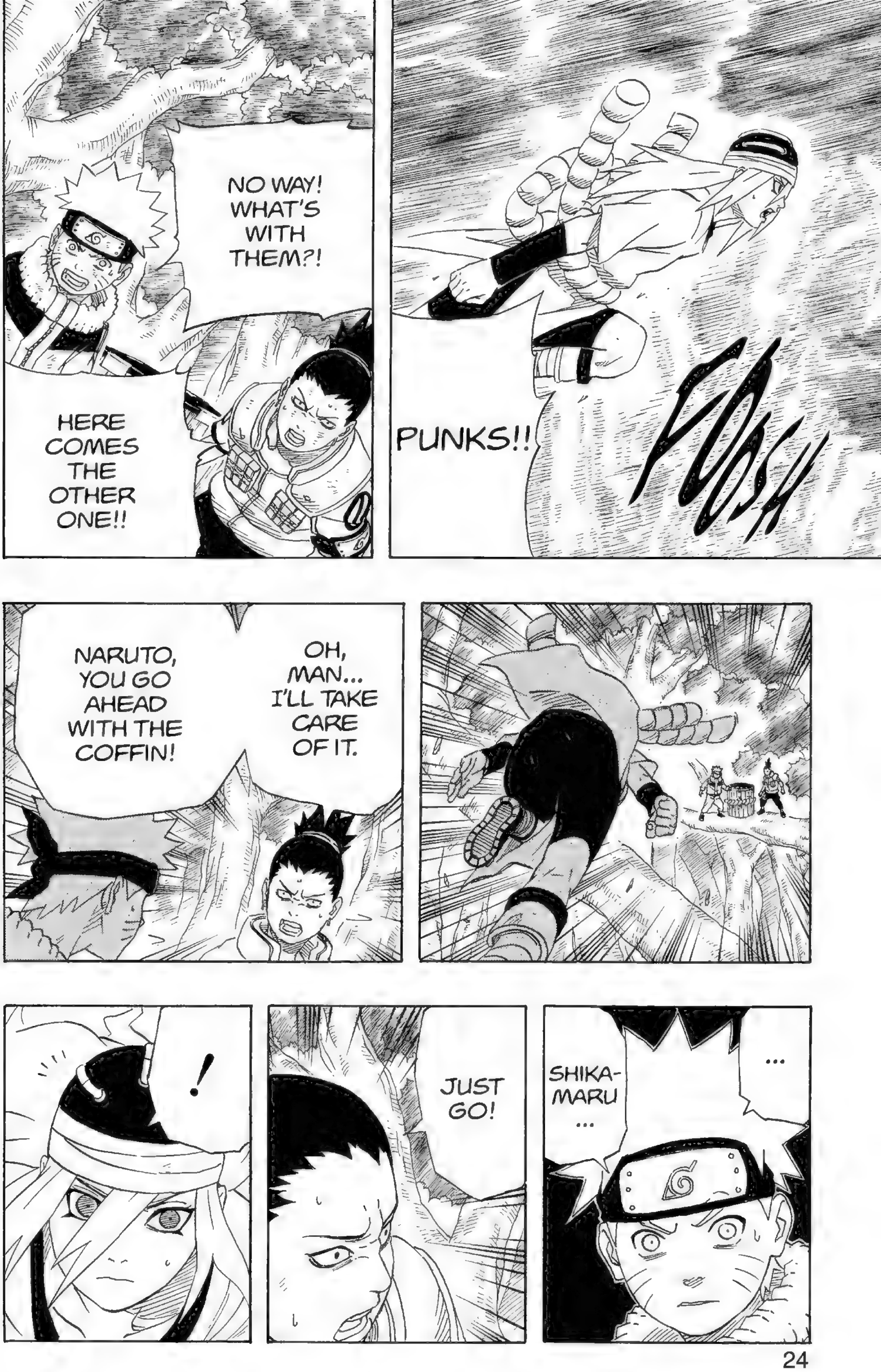
READ THIS WAY


WHIMPER...
爆
PSSSSS
TOK
WHIMPER...

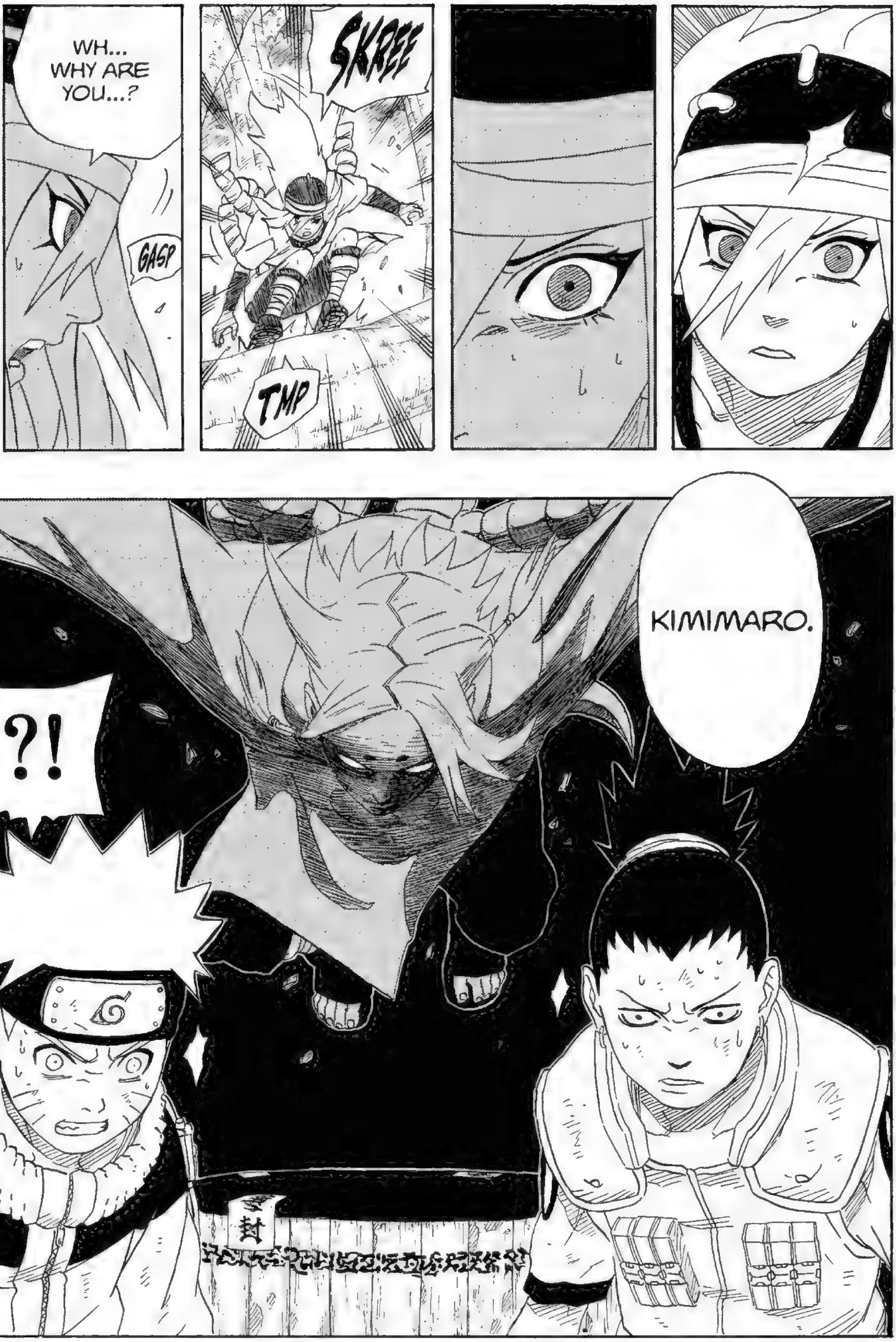

BLAM
SHF
KIBA! AKA-MARU!!
SCRAPE
OH, NO...
BOOF
NGH...
BOOM
UGH!

READ THIS WAY


TSK...
...NO...
WHOAAAAH!!

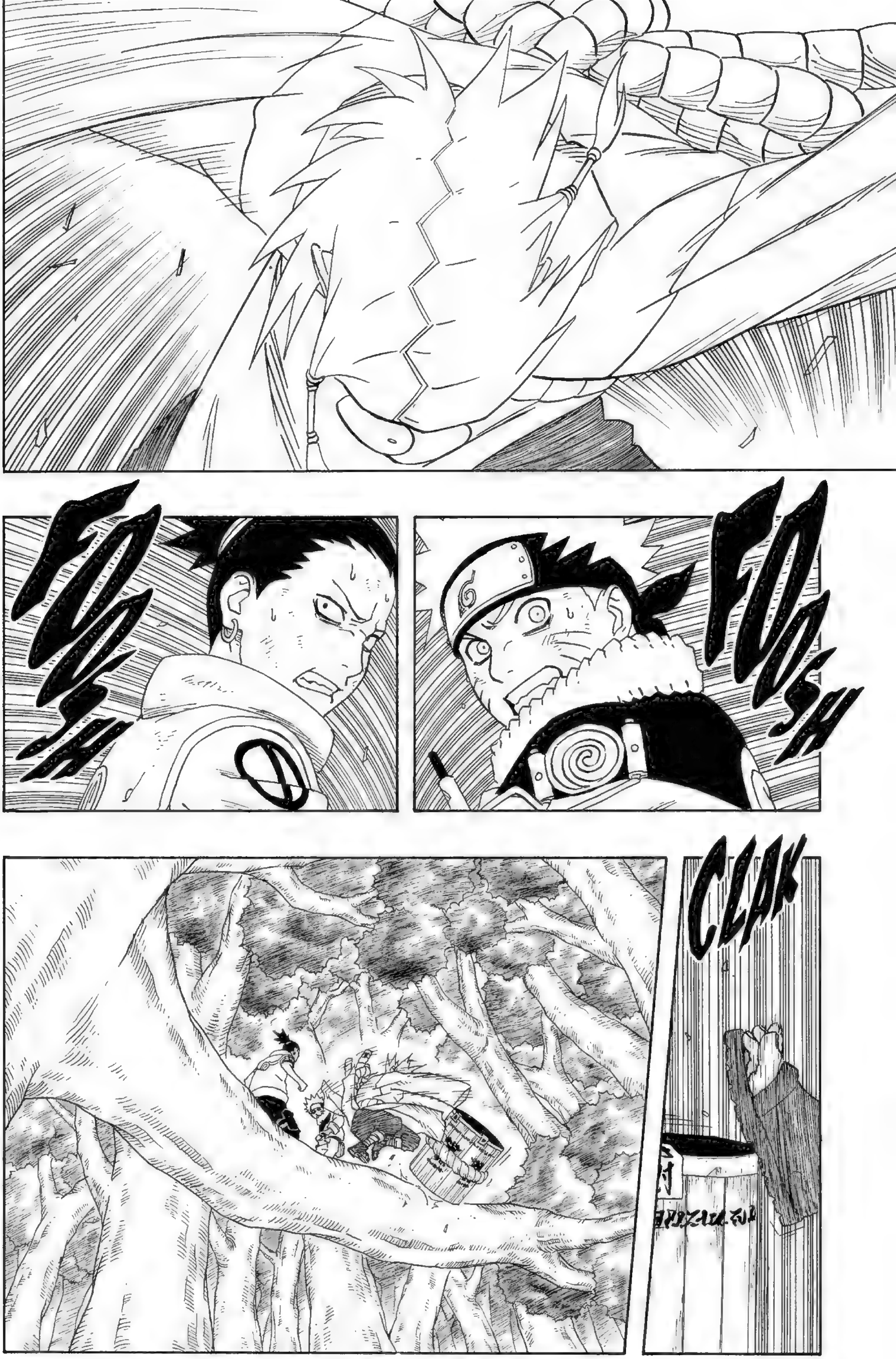

PUNKS!!
POOSH
NO WAY! WHAT'S WITH THEM?!
HERE COMES THE OTHER ONE!!
OH, MAN... I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.
NARUTO, YOU GO AHEAD WITH THE COFFIN!
...
SHIKAMARU ...
JUST GO!
!

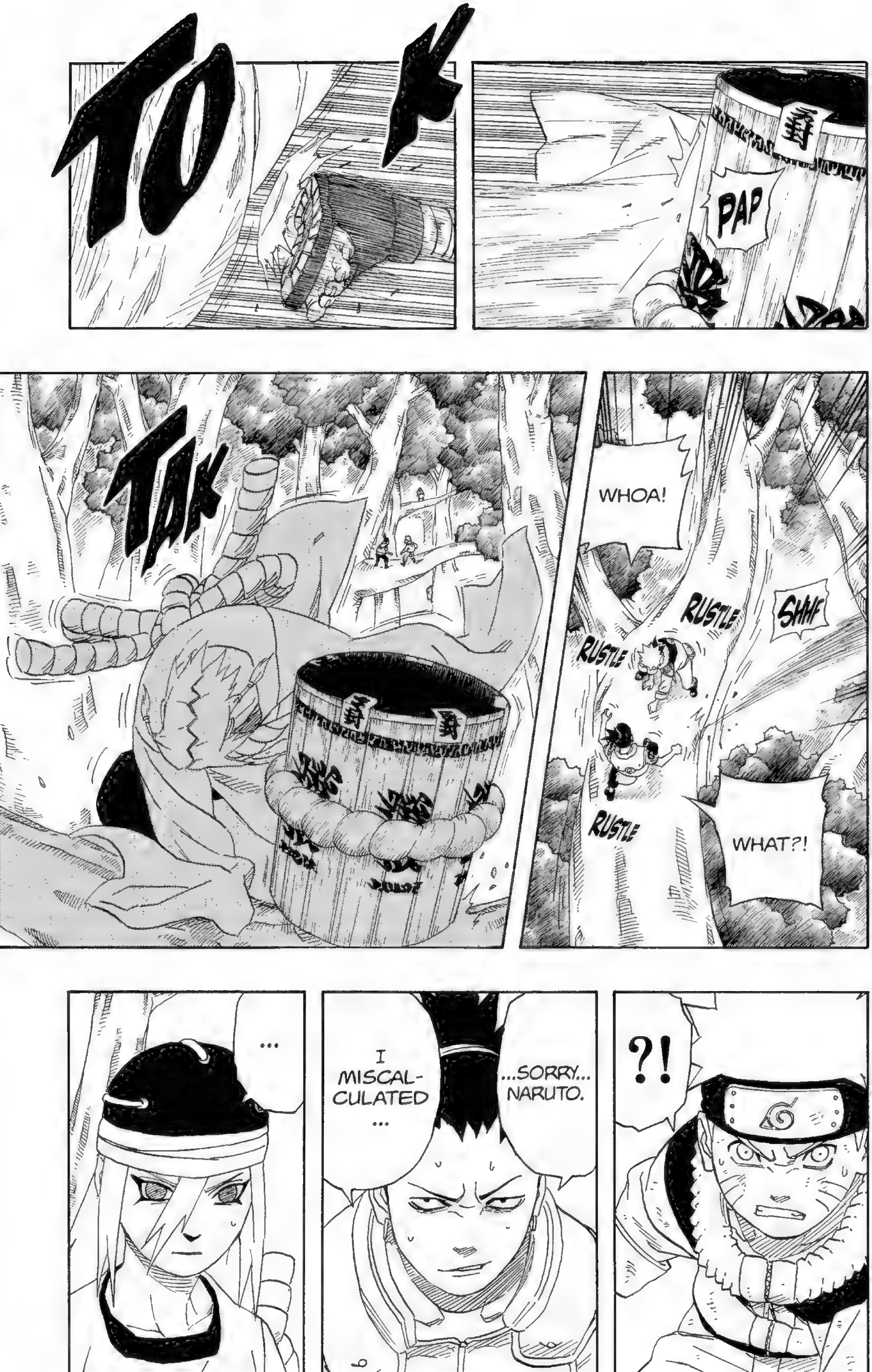
READ THIS WAY

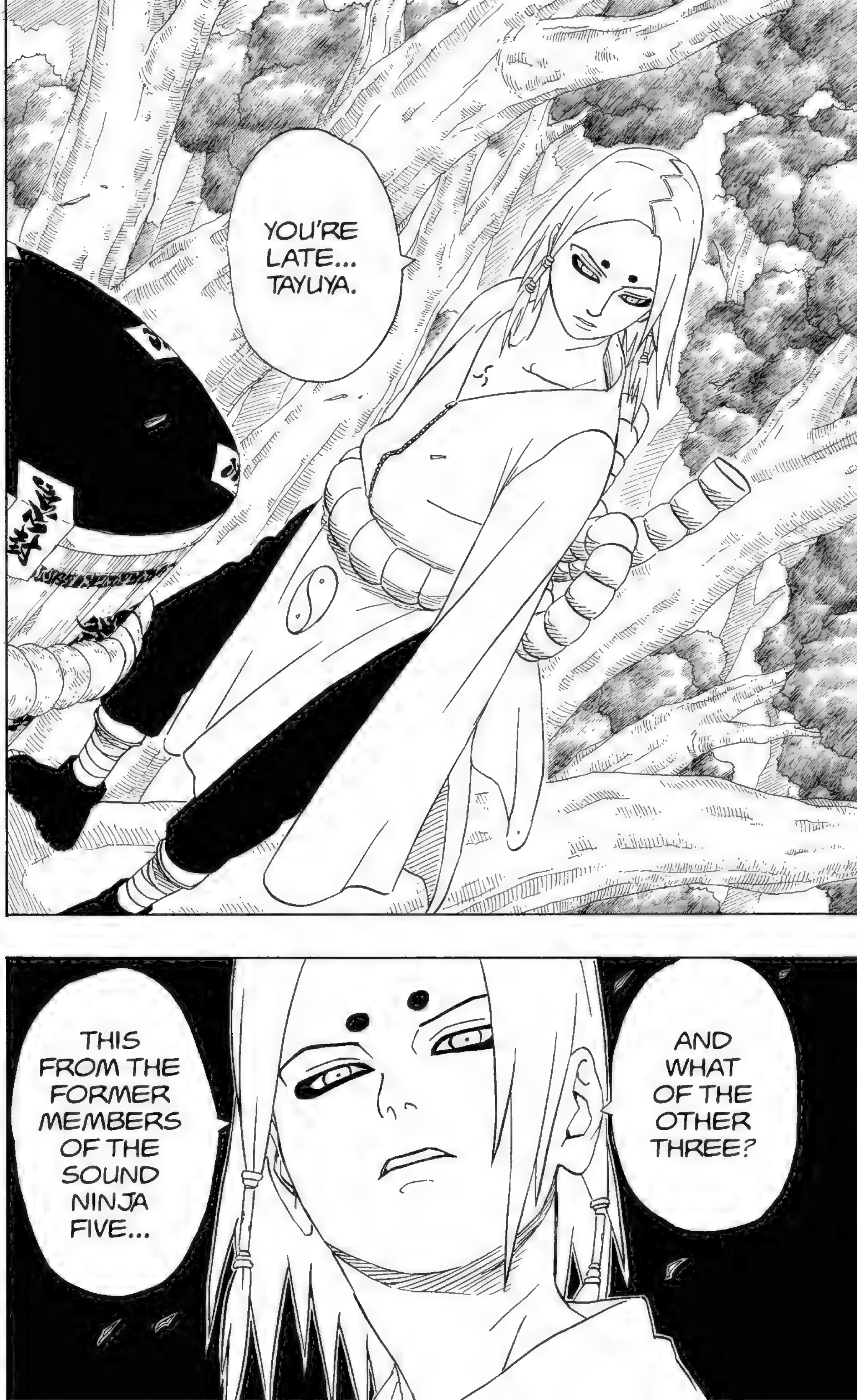

SKREE
TMP
WH... WHY ARE YOU...?
GASP
KIMIMARO.
?!

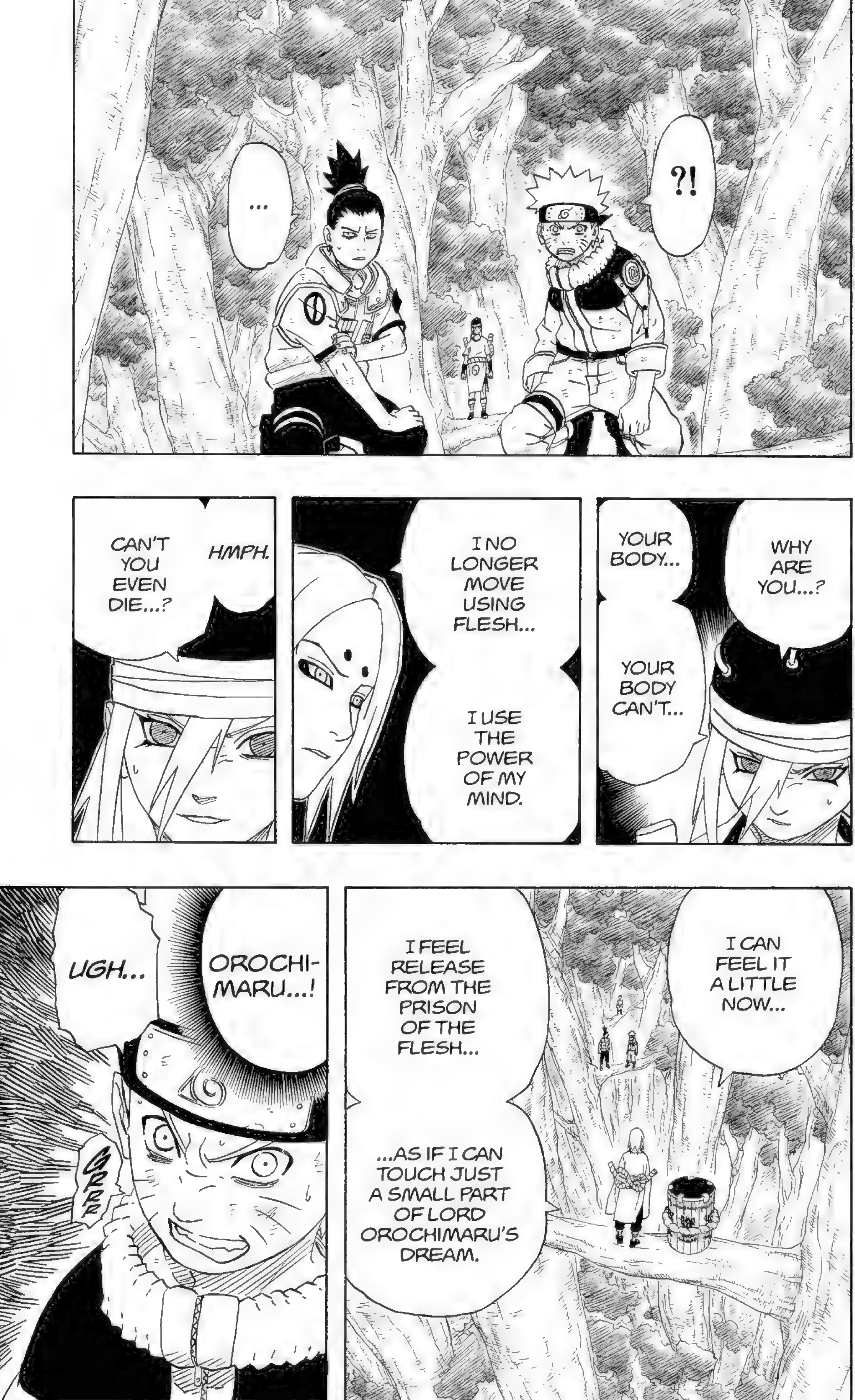
NARUTO™

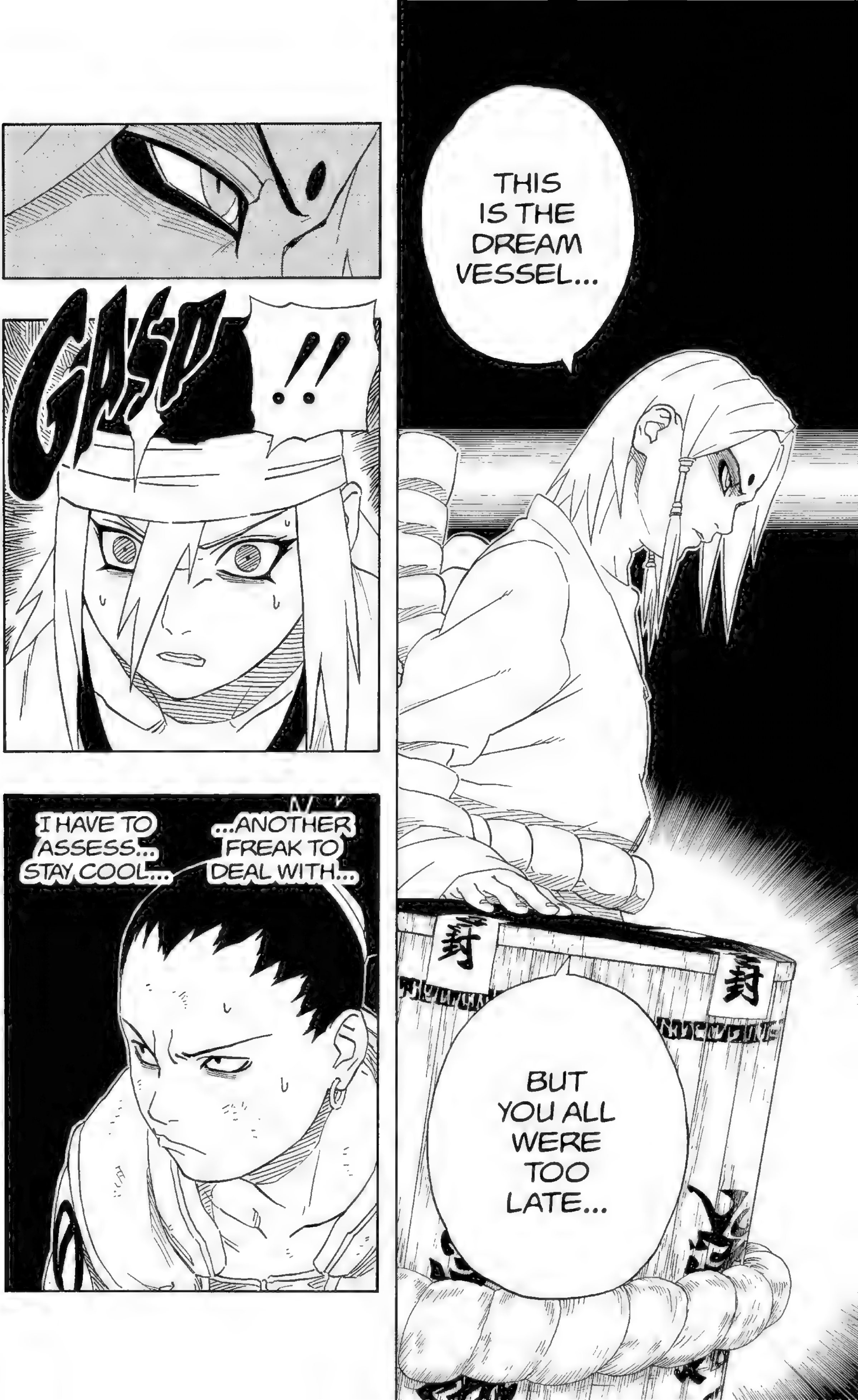
Number 201: Miscalculation...!!


FOOSH
FOOSH
CLAK

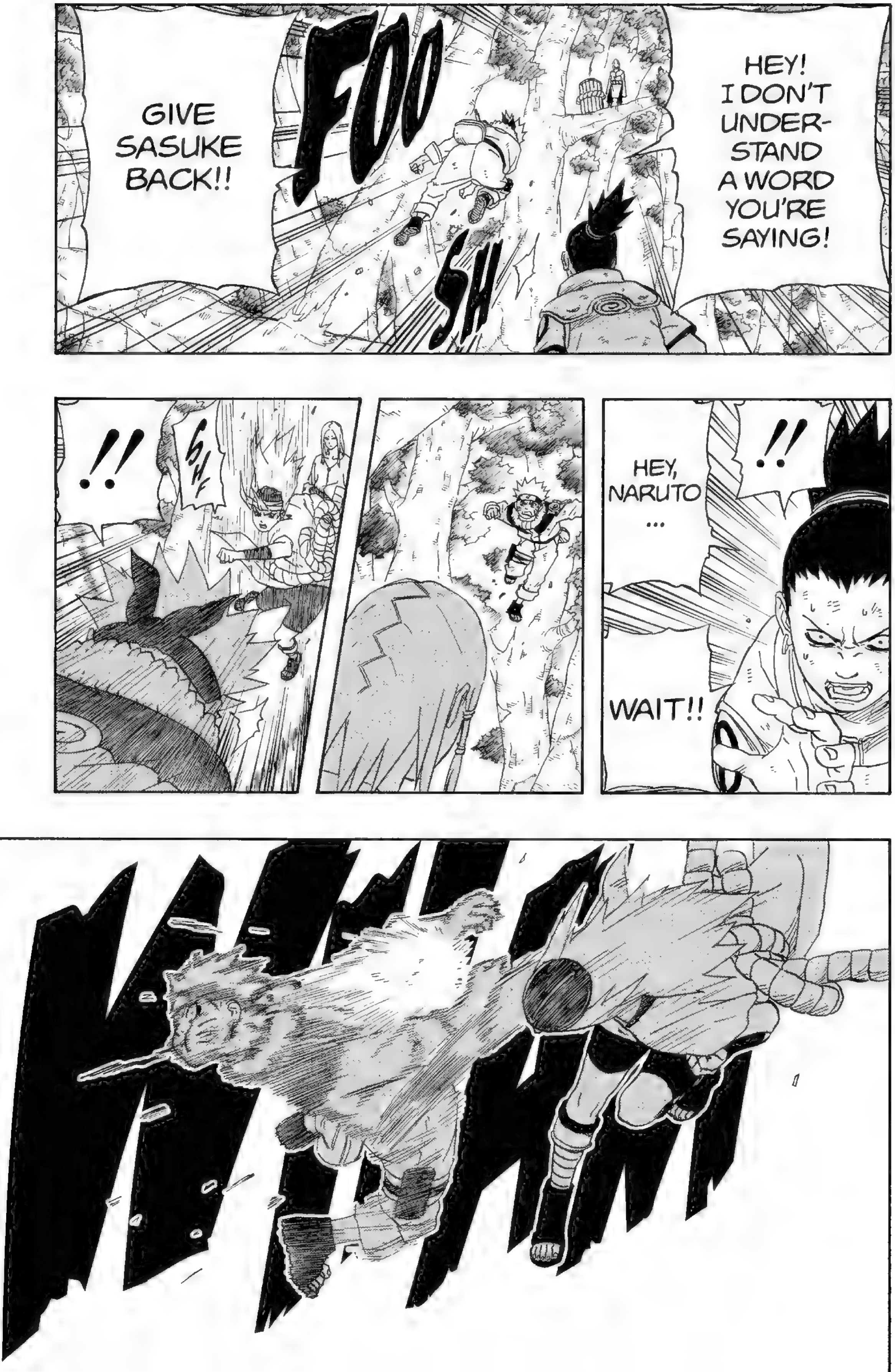

PAP
TOK
WHOA!
RUSTLE
SHHF
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
WHAT?!
TAK
?!
...SORRY... NARUTO.
I MISCALCULATED...
...

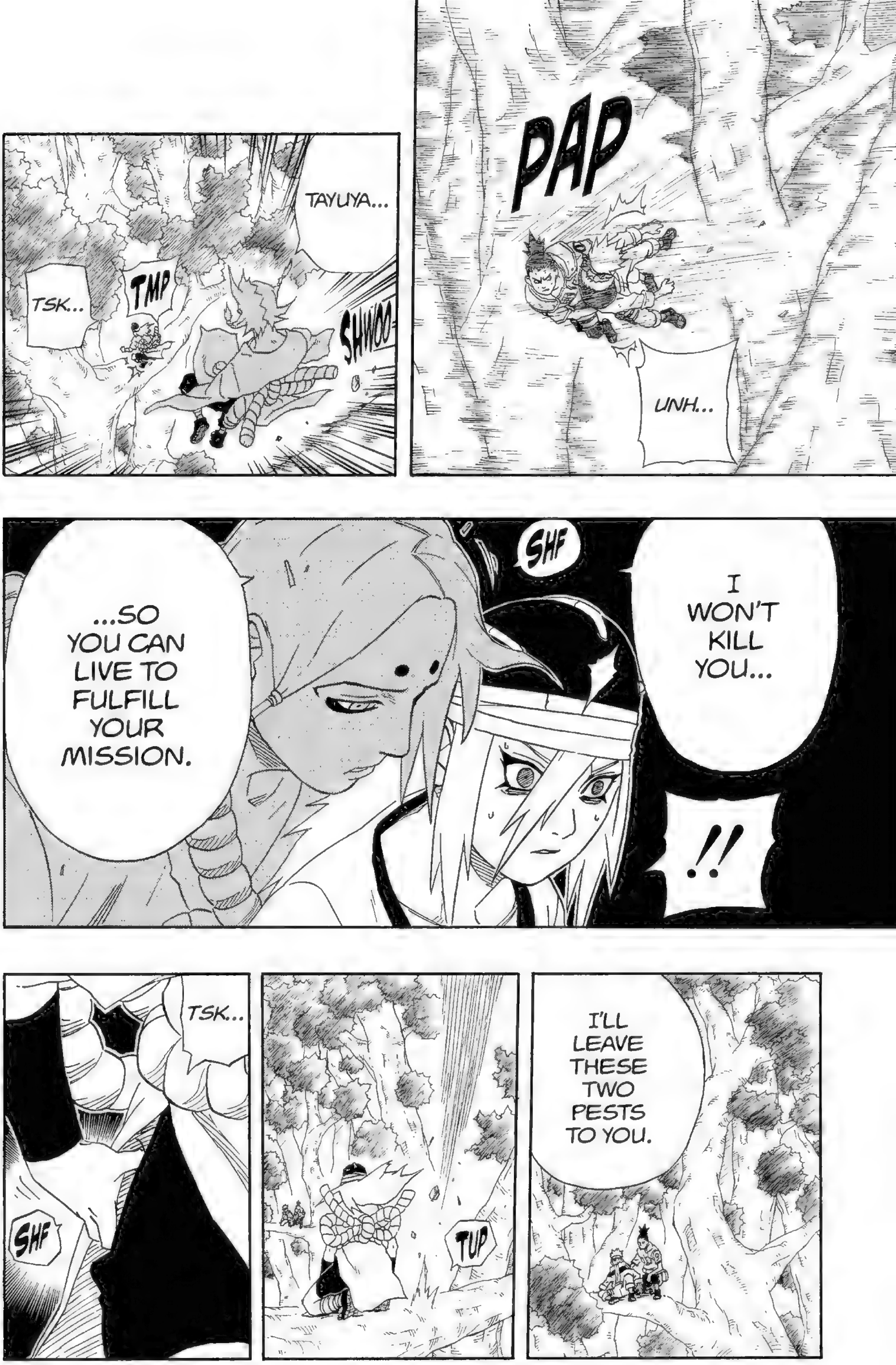

YOU'RE LATE... TAYUYA.
AND WHAT OF THE OTHER THREE?
THIS FROM THE FORMER MEMBERS OF THE SOUND NINJA FIVE...

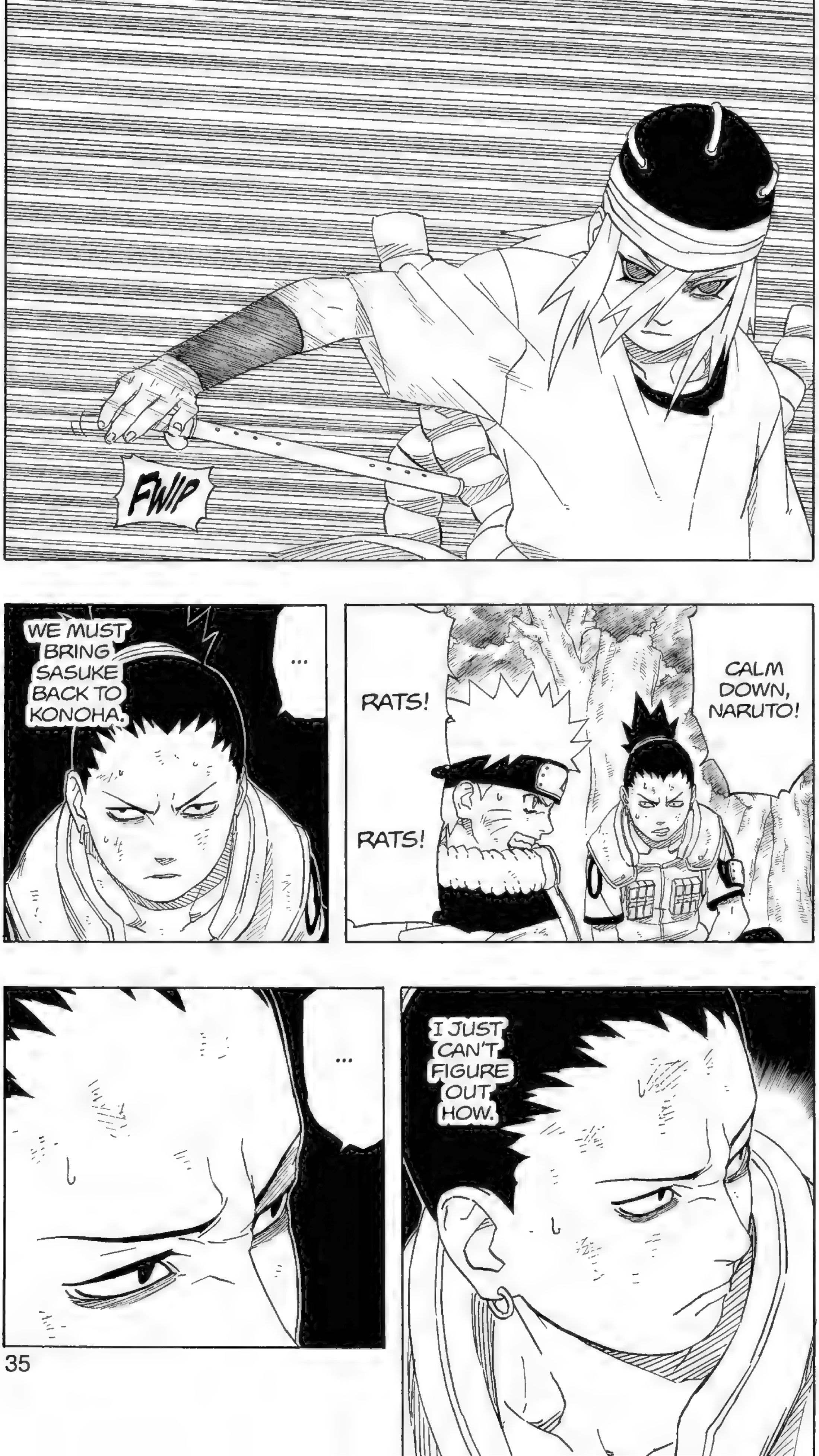

?!
...
WHY ARE YOU...?
YOUR BODY...
YOUR BODY CAN'T...
I NO LONGER MOVE USING FLESH...
I USE THE POWER OF MY MIND.
HMPH.
CAN'T YOU EVEN DIE...?
I CAN FEEL IT A LITTLE NOW...
I FEEL RELEASE FROM THE PRISON OF THE FLESH...
...AS IF I CAN TOUCH JUST A SMALL PART OF LORD OROCHIMARU'S DREAM.
OROCHIMARU...!
UGH...
GRRR

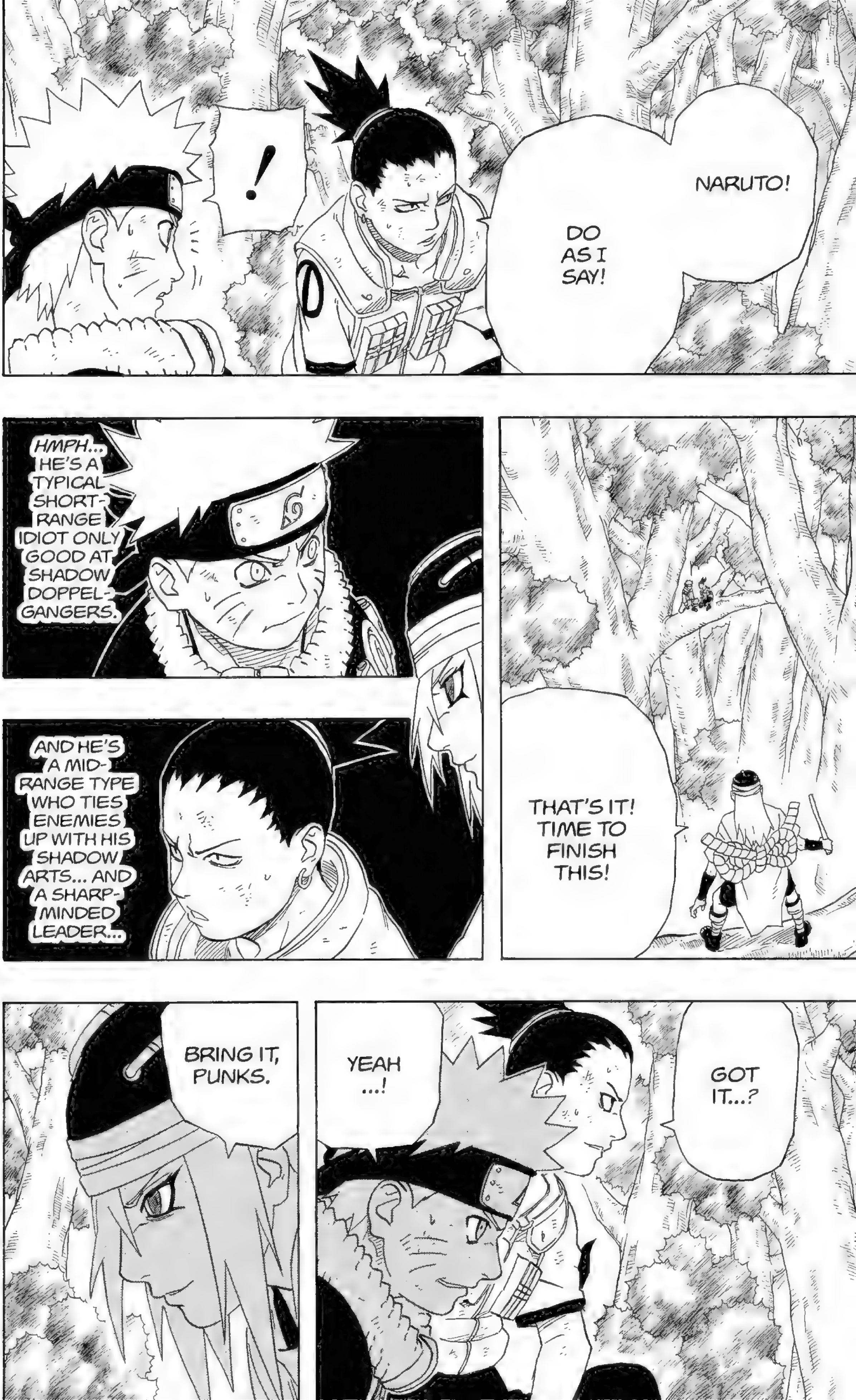

THIS IS THE DREAM VESSEL...
BUT YOU ALL WERE TOO LATE...
GASP
!!
...ANOTHER FREAK TO DEAL WITH...
I HAVE TO ASSESS... STAY COOL...

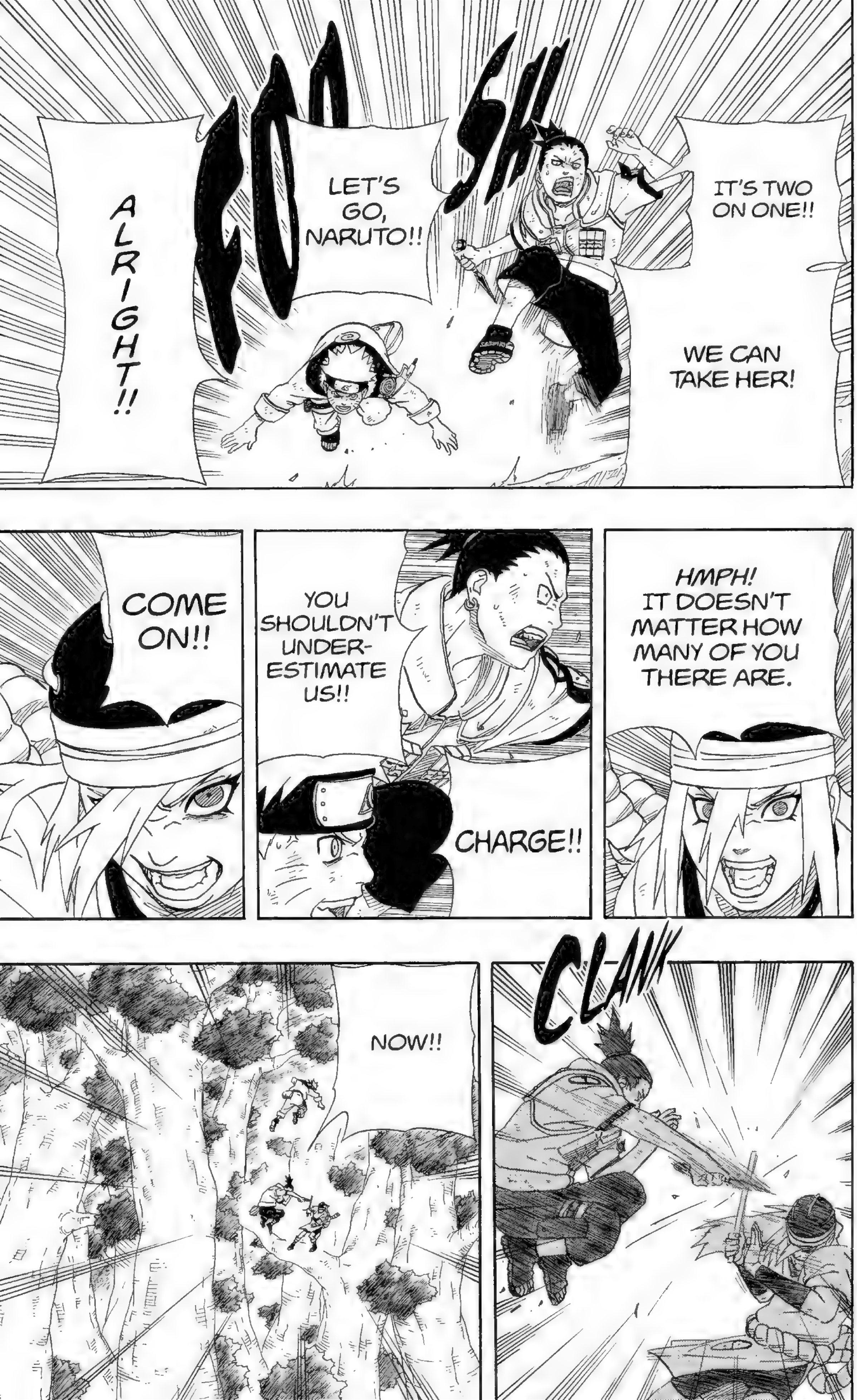
READ THIS WAY

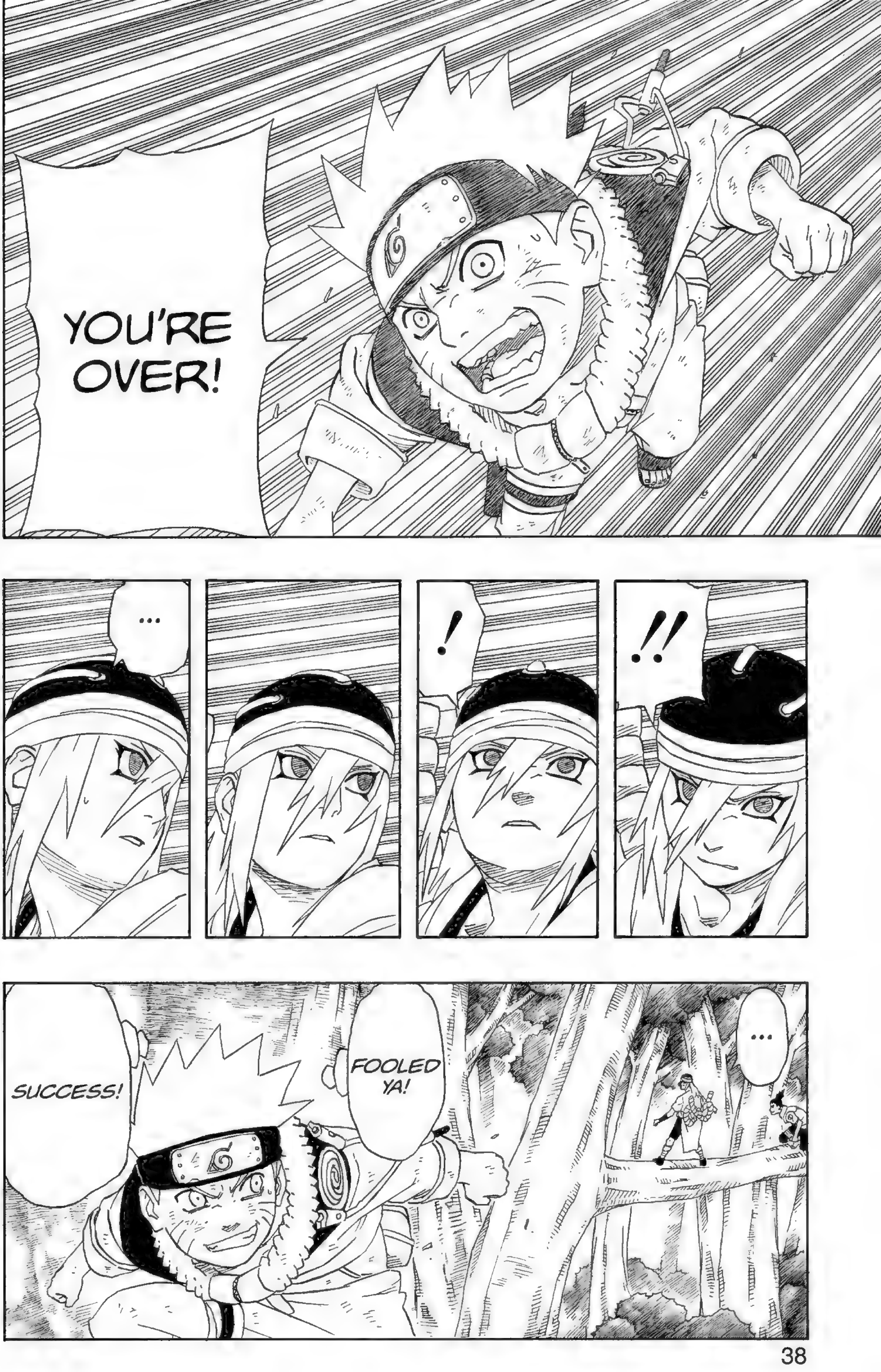

HEY! I DON'T UNDERSTAND A WORD YOU'RE SAYING!
FOOSH
GIVE SASUKE BACK!!
!!
HEY, NARUTO...
WAIT!!
!!
SHF


PAP
UNH...
TAYUYA...
TSK...
TMP
SHWOO
SHF
I WON'T KILL YOU...
!!
...SO YOU CAN LIVE TO FULFILL YOUR MISSION.
I'LL LEAVE THESE TWO PESTS TO YOU.
TUP
TSK...
SHF

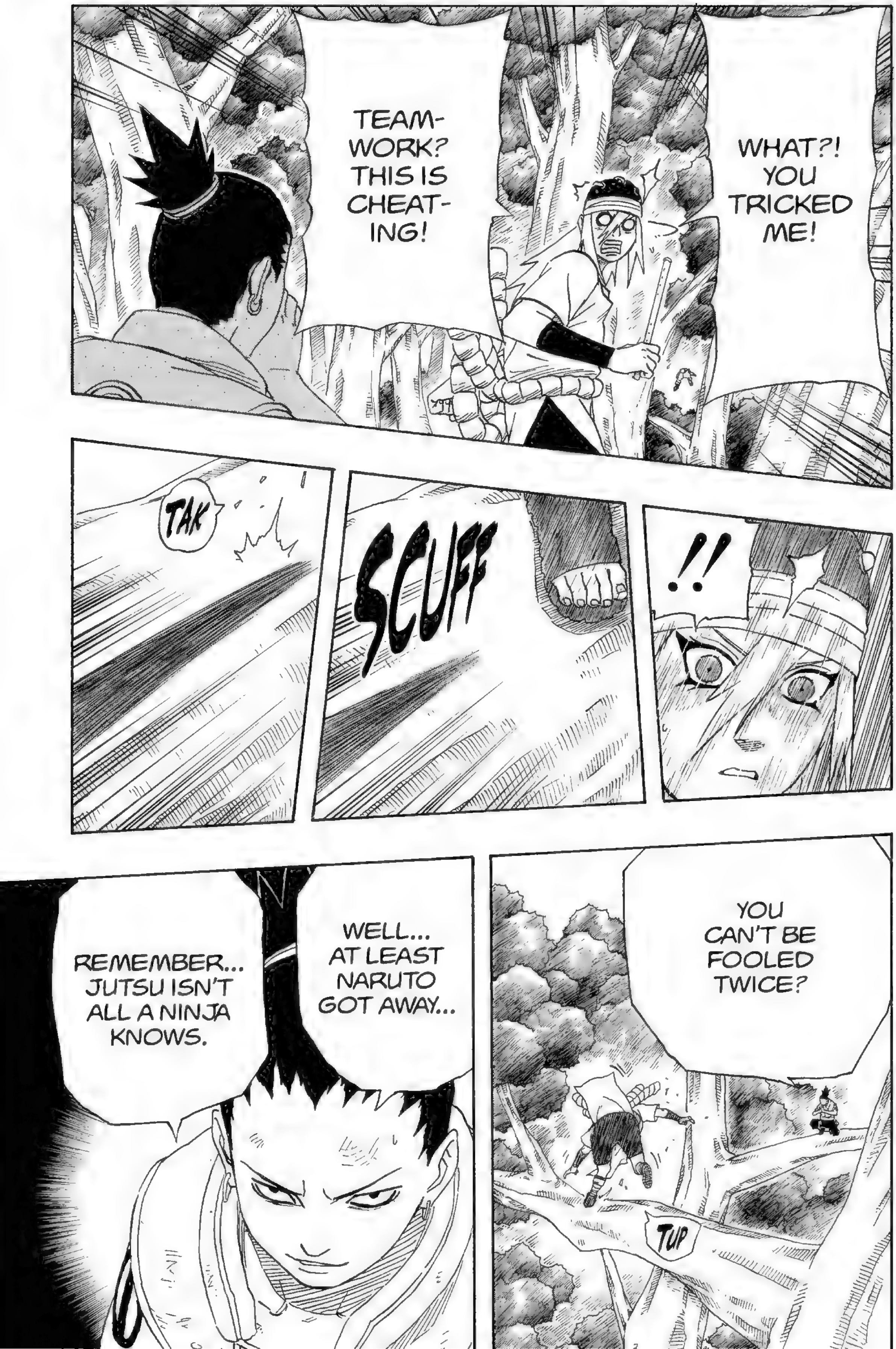

FWIP
CALM DOWN, NARUTO!
RATS!
RATS!
...
WE MUST BRING SASUKE BACK TO KONOHA.
I JUST CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW.
...

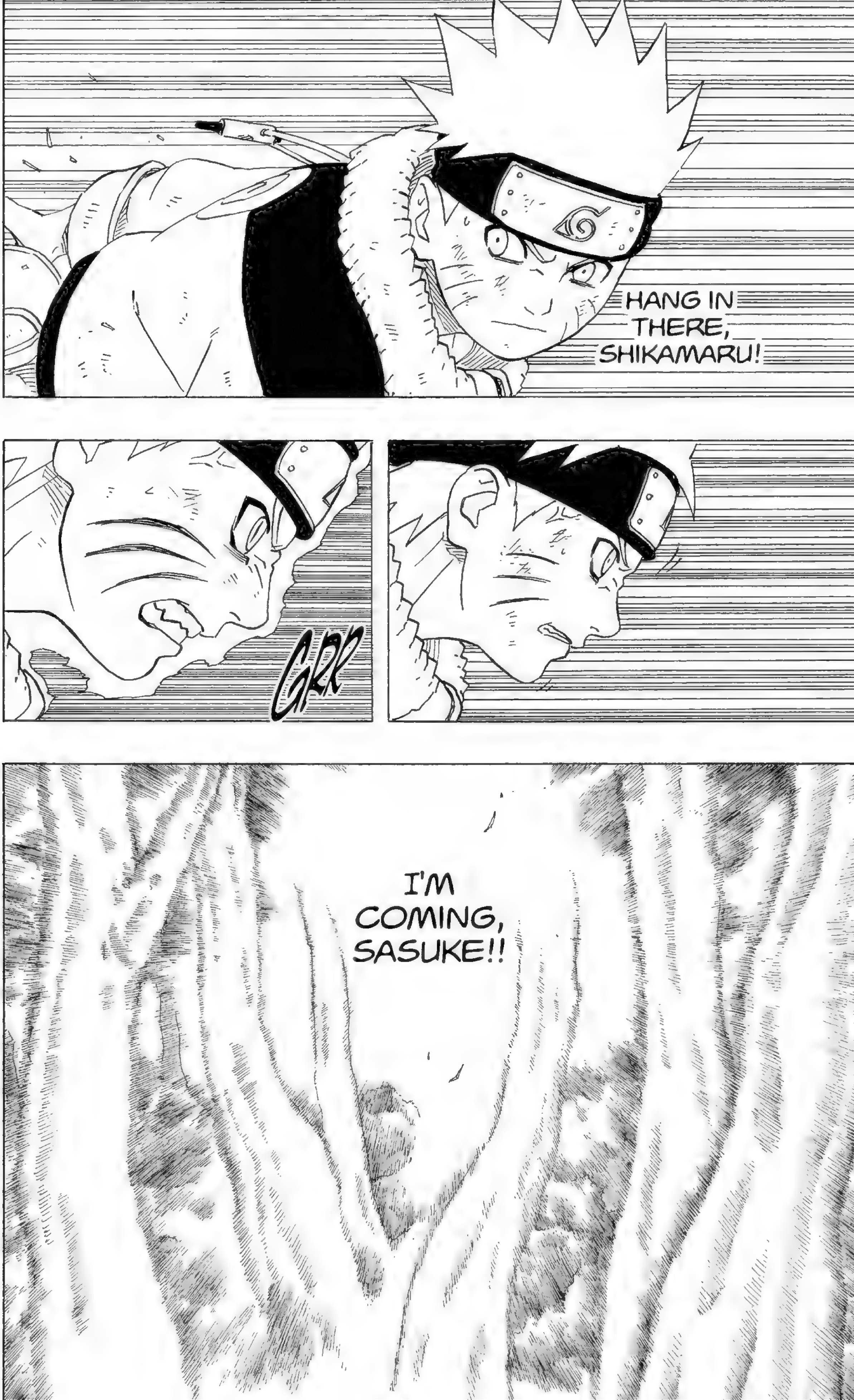

NARUTO!
DO AS I SAY!
!
THAT'S IT! TIME TO FINISH THIS!
HMPH... HE'S A TYPICAL SHORT-RANGE IDIOT ONLY GOOD AT SHADOW DOPPELGANGERS.
AND HE'S A MID-RANGE TYPE WHO TIES ENEMIES UP WITH HIS SHADOW ARTS... AND A SHARP-MINDED LEADER...
GOT IT...?
YEAH ...!
BRING IT, PUNKS.

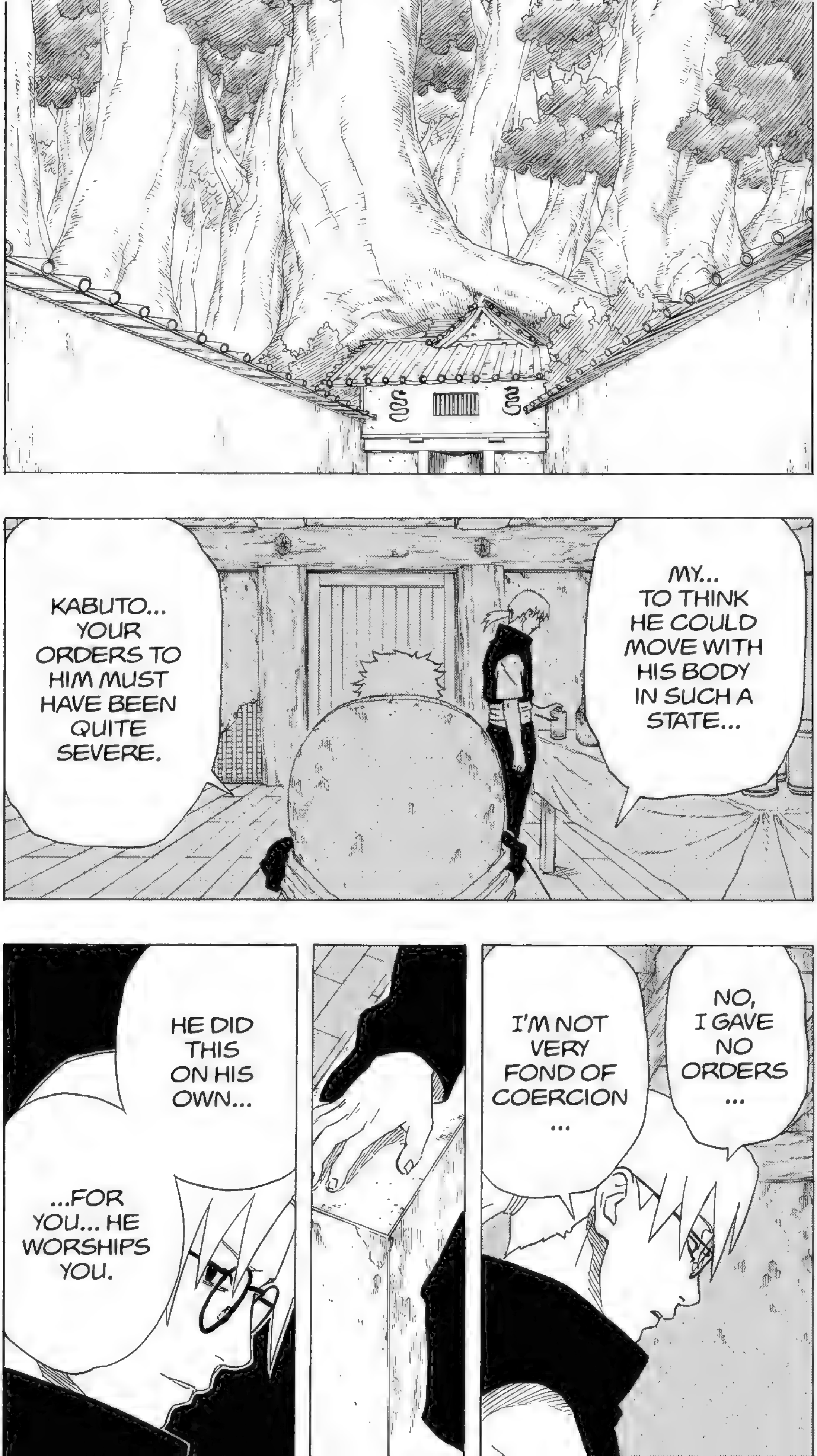

IT'S TWO ON ONE!!
WE CAN TAKE HER!
LET'S GO, NARUTO!!
FOSH
ALRIGHT!!
HMPH! IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY OF YOU THERE ARE.
YOU SHOULDN'T UNDERESTIMATE US!!
CHARGE!!
COME ON!!
CLANK
NOW!!

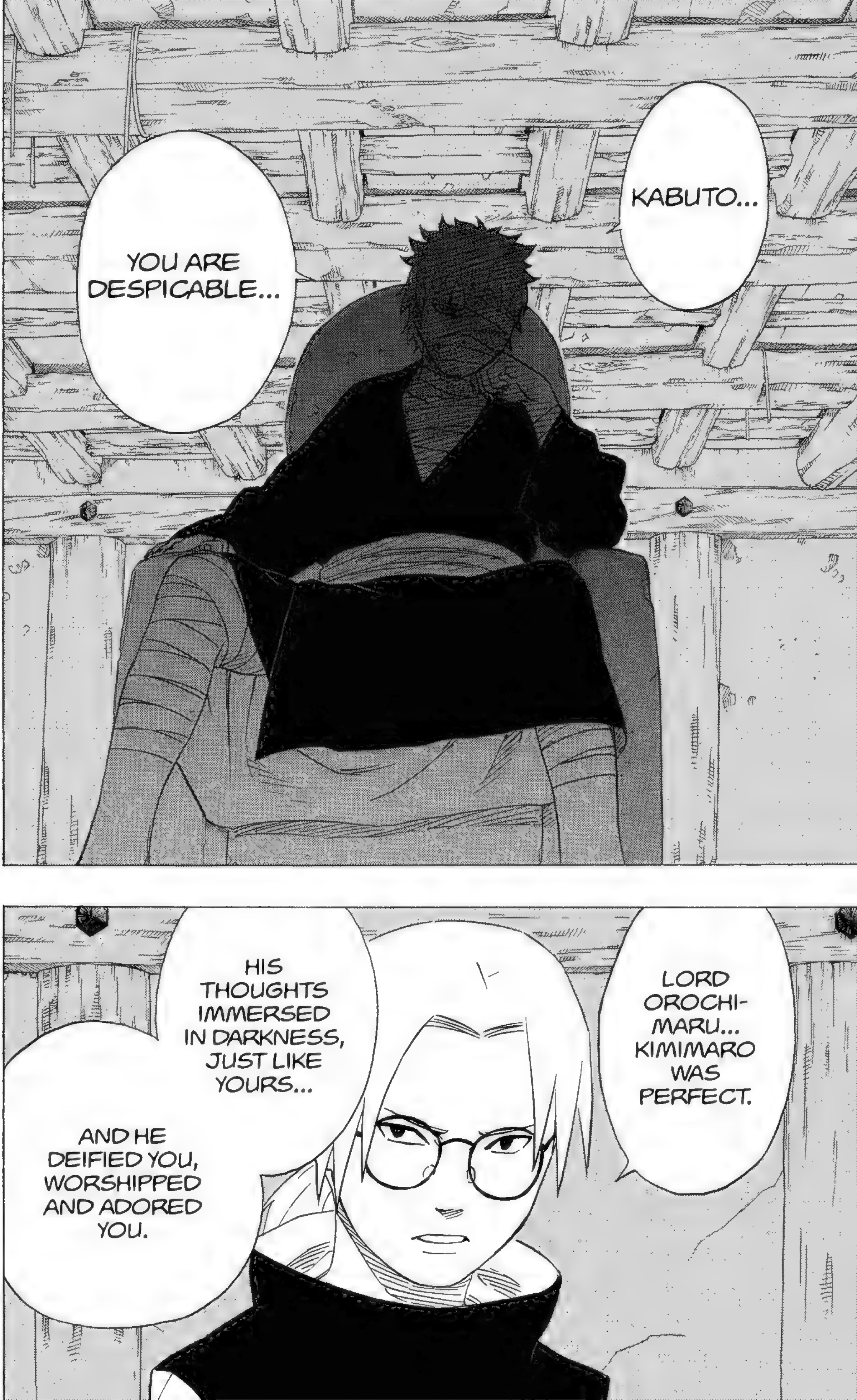

YOU'RE OVER!
!!
!
...
...
FOOLED YA!
SUCCESS!

READ THIS WAY

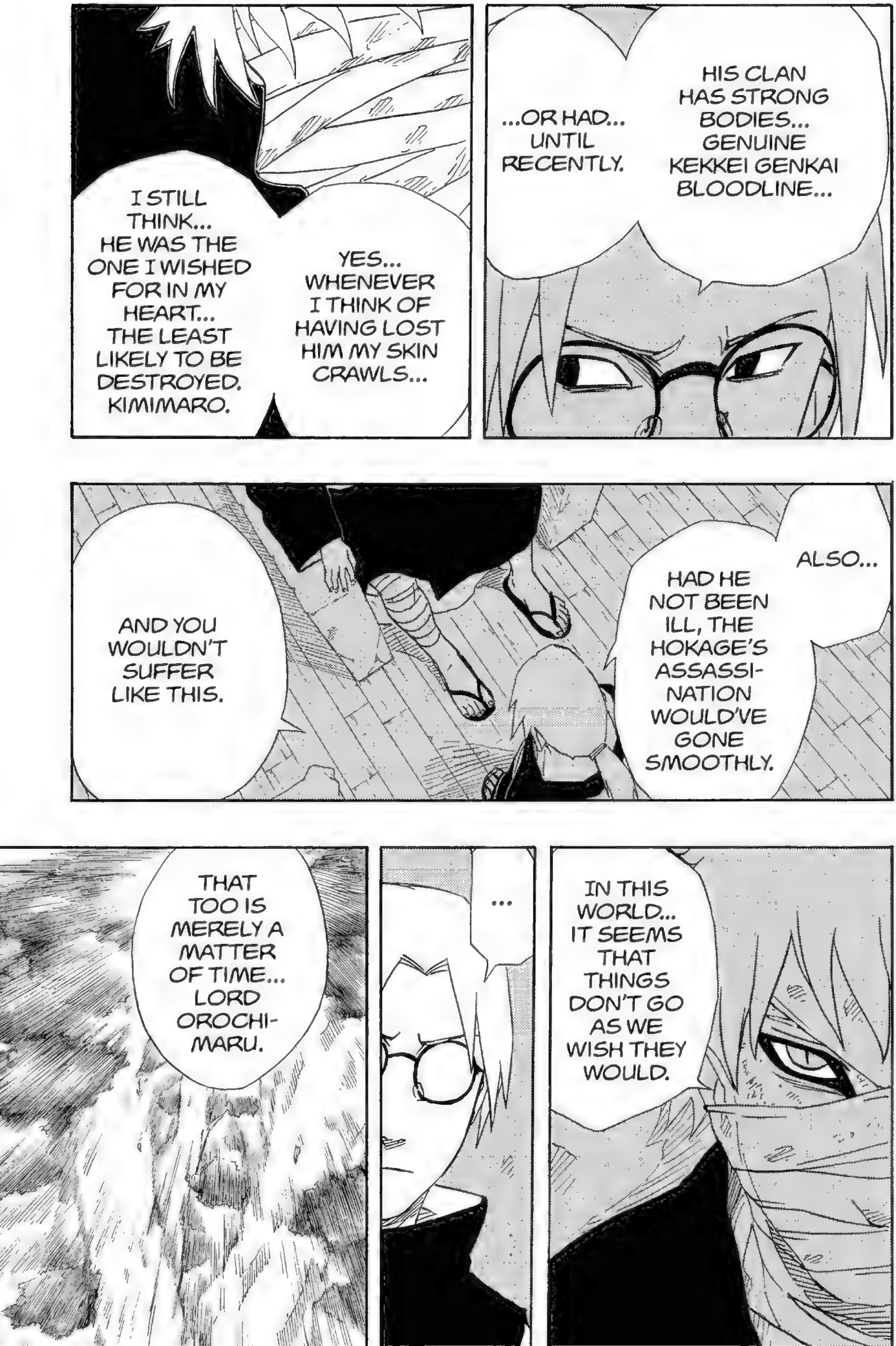

WHAT?! YOU TRICKED ME!
TEAMWORK? THIS IS CHEATING!
!!
SCUFF
TAK
YOU CAN'T BE FOOLED TWICE?
TUP
WELL... AT LEAST NARUTO GOT AWAY...
REMEMBER... JUTSU ISN'T ALL A NINJA KNOWS.

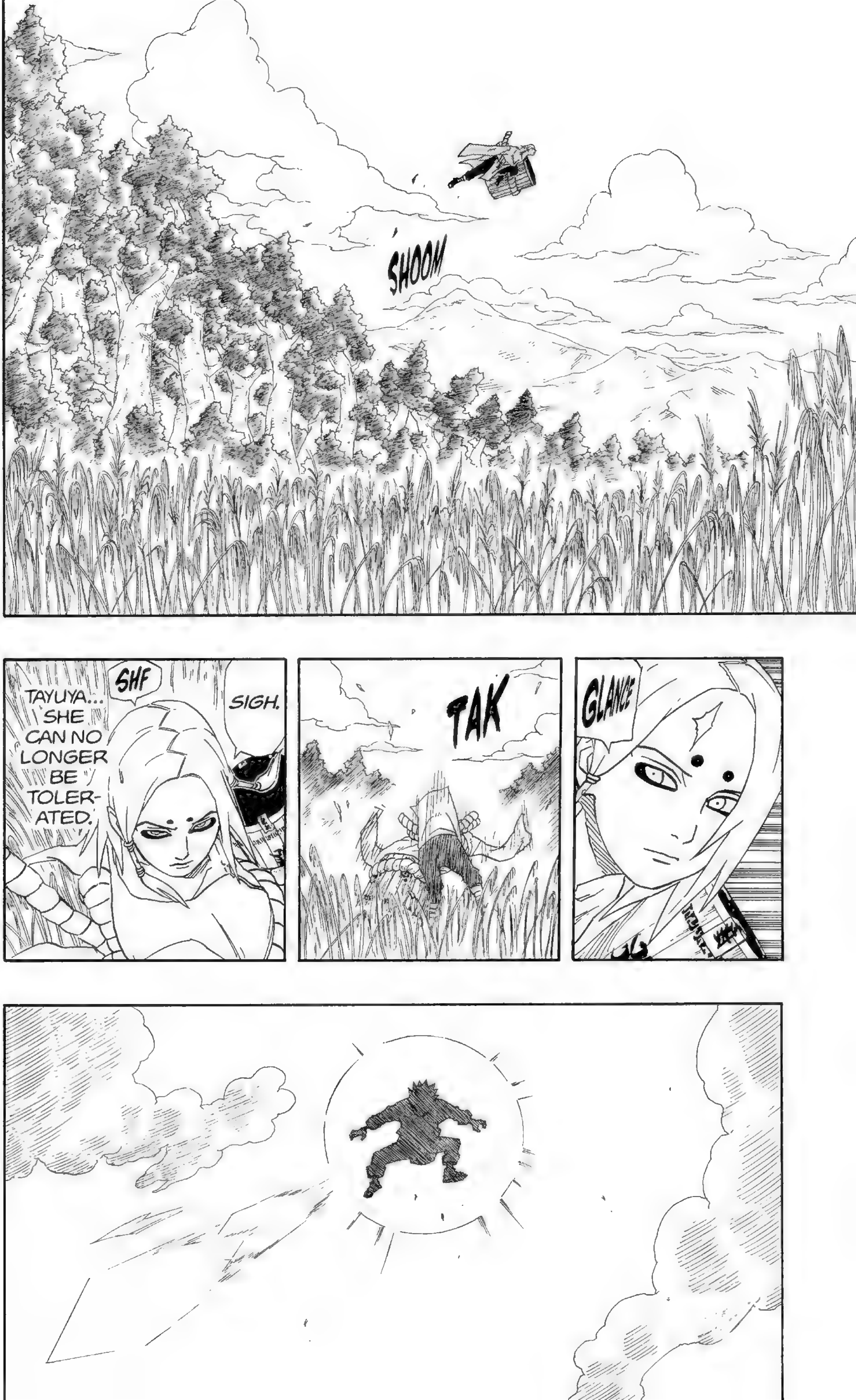

HANG IN THERE, SHIKAMARU!
GRR
I'M COMING, SASUKE!!

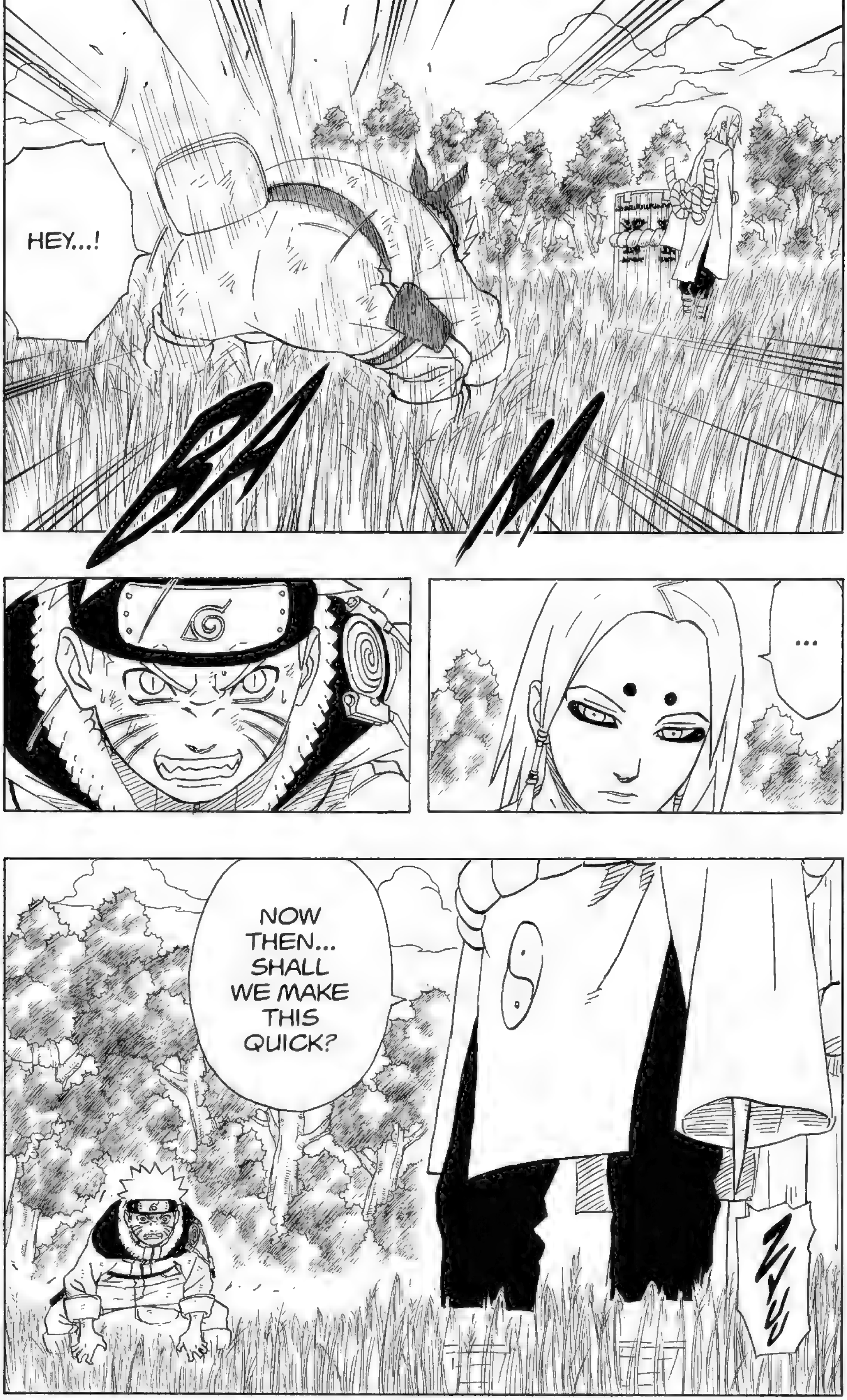

MY... TO THINK HE COULD MOVE WITH HIS BODY IN SUCH A STATE...
KABUTO... YOUR ORDERS TO HIM MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE SEVERE.
NO, I GAVE NO ORDERS...
I'M NOT VERY FOND OF COERCION...
HE DID THIS ON HIS OWN...
...FOR YOU... HE WORSHIPS YOU.


KABUTO...
YOU ARE DESPICABLE...
LORD OROCHIMARU... KIMIMARO WAS PERFECT.
HIS THOUGHTS IMMERSED IN DARKNESS, JUST LIKE YOURS...
AND HE DEIFIED YOU, WORSHIPPED AND ADORED YOU.

READ THIS WAY

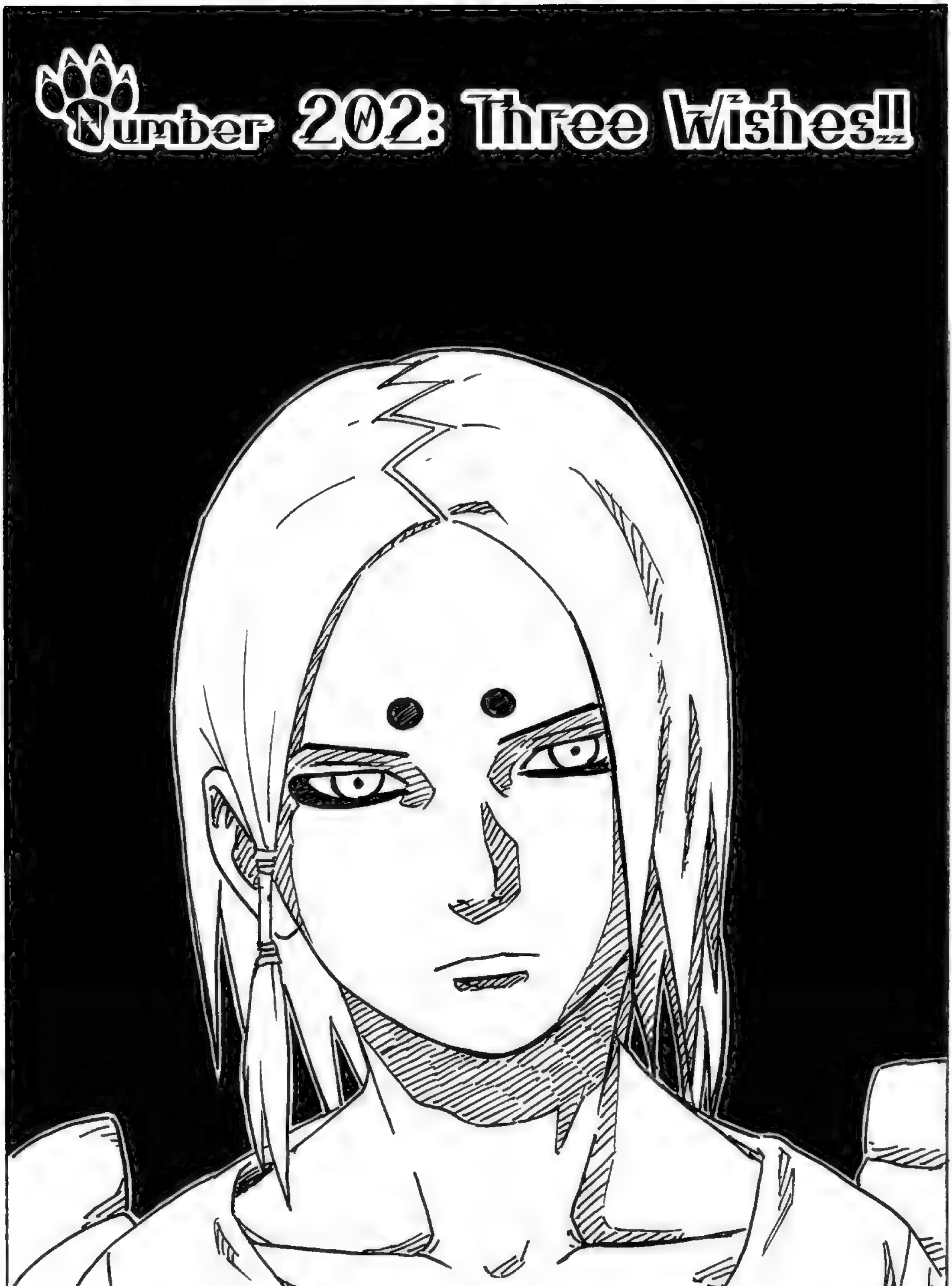

HIS CLAN HAS STRONG BODIES... GENUINE KEKKEI GENKAI BLOODLINE...
...OR HAD... UNTIL RECENTLY.
YES... WHENEVER I THINK OF HAVING LOST HIM MY SKIN CRAWLS...
I STILL THINK... HE WAS THE ONE I WISHED FOR IN MY HEART... THE LEAST LIKELY TO BE DESTROYED. KIMIMARO.
ALSO...
HAD HE NOT BEEN ILL, THE HOKAGE'S ASSASSINATION WOULD'VE GONE SMOOTHLY.
AND YOU WOULDN'T SUFFER LIKE THIS.
IN THIS WORLD... IT SEEMS THAT THINGS DON'T GO AS WE WISH THEY WOULD.
...
THAT TOO IS MERELY A MATTER OF TIME... LORD OROCHIMARU.

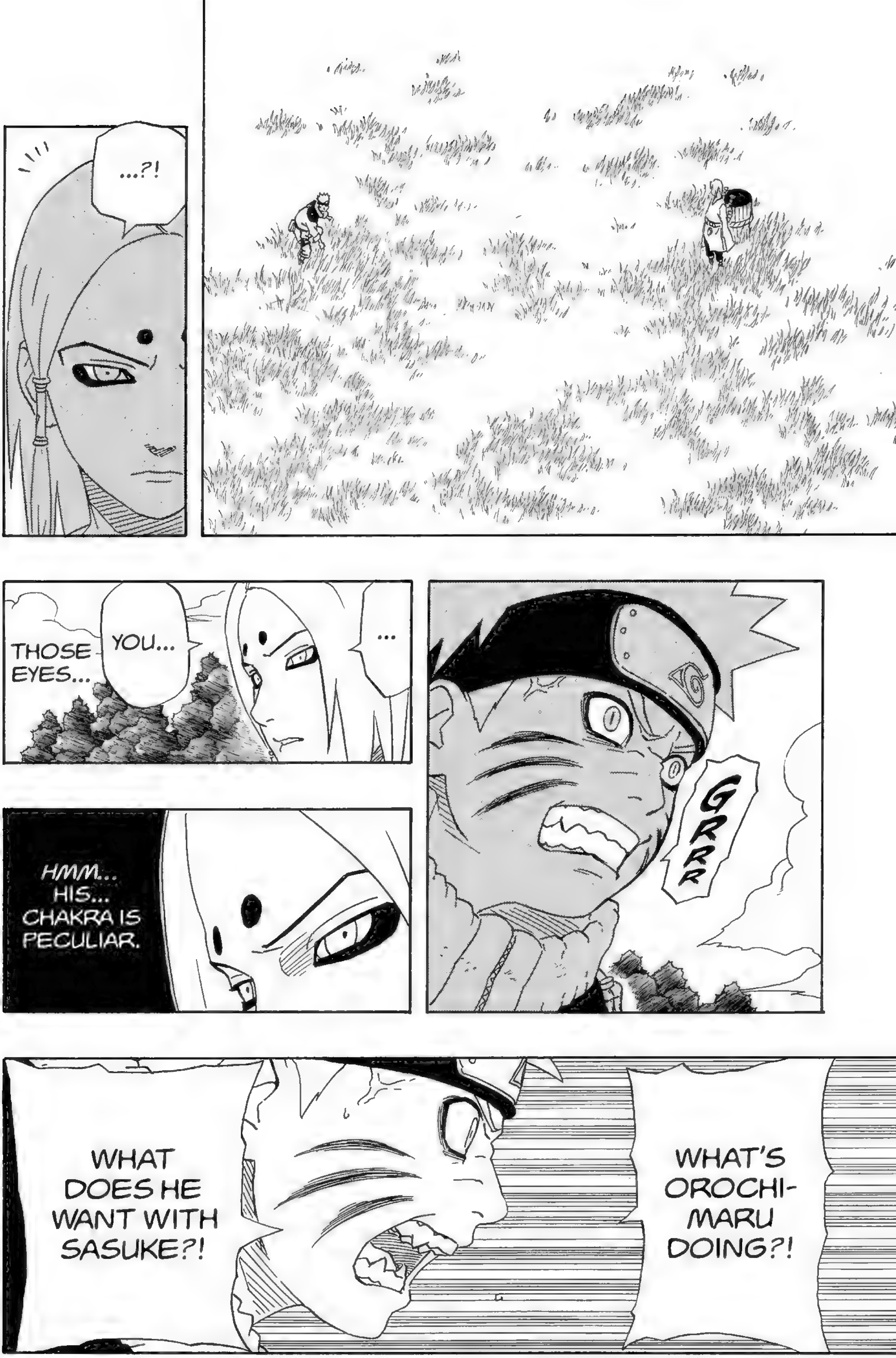

SHOOM
GLANCE
TAK
SIGH.
SHF
TAYUYA... SHE CAN NO LONGER BE TOLERATED.


HEY...!
BAM
...
NOW THEN... SHALL WE MAKE THIS QUICK?

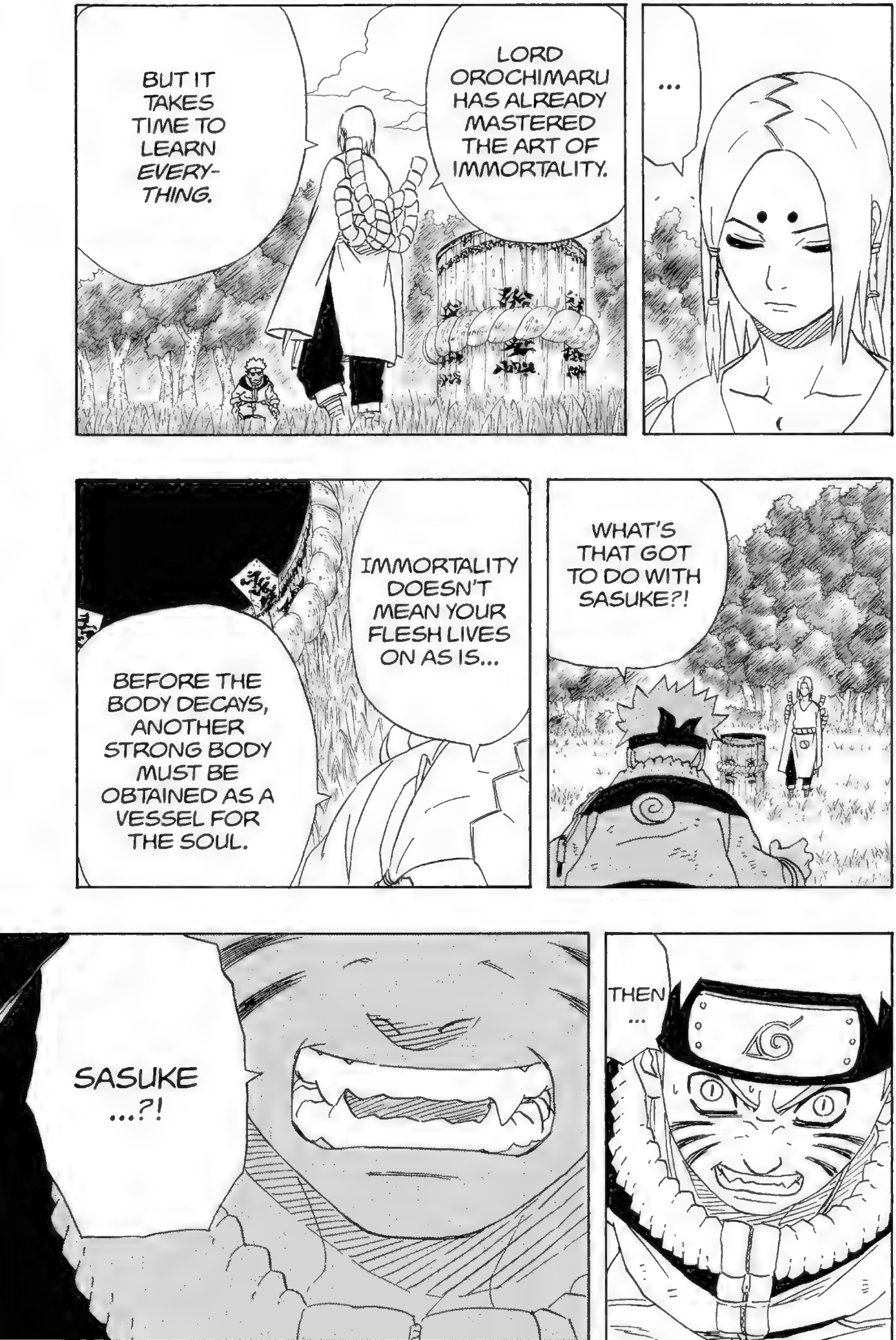
NARUTO™

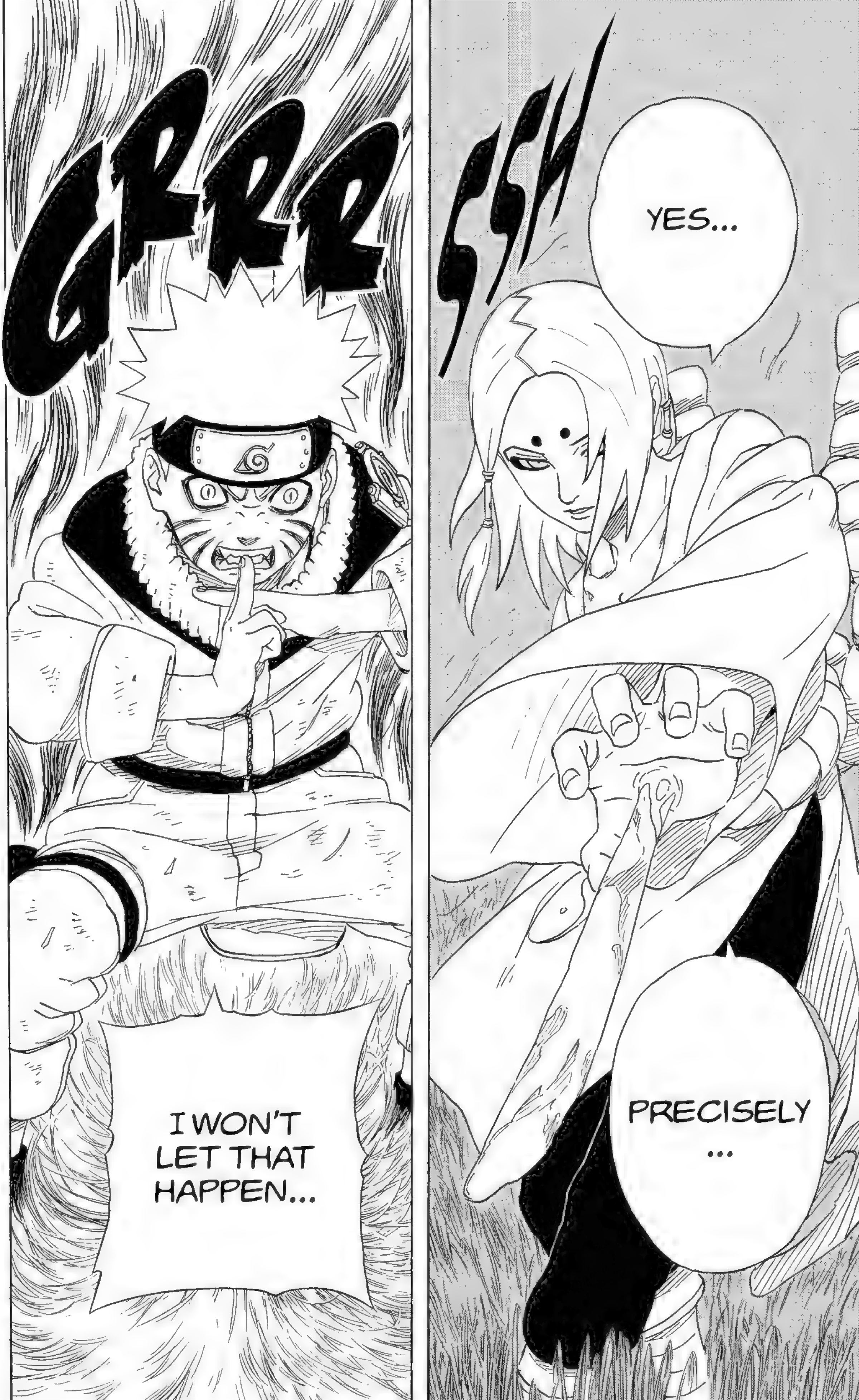
Number 202: Three Wishes!!



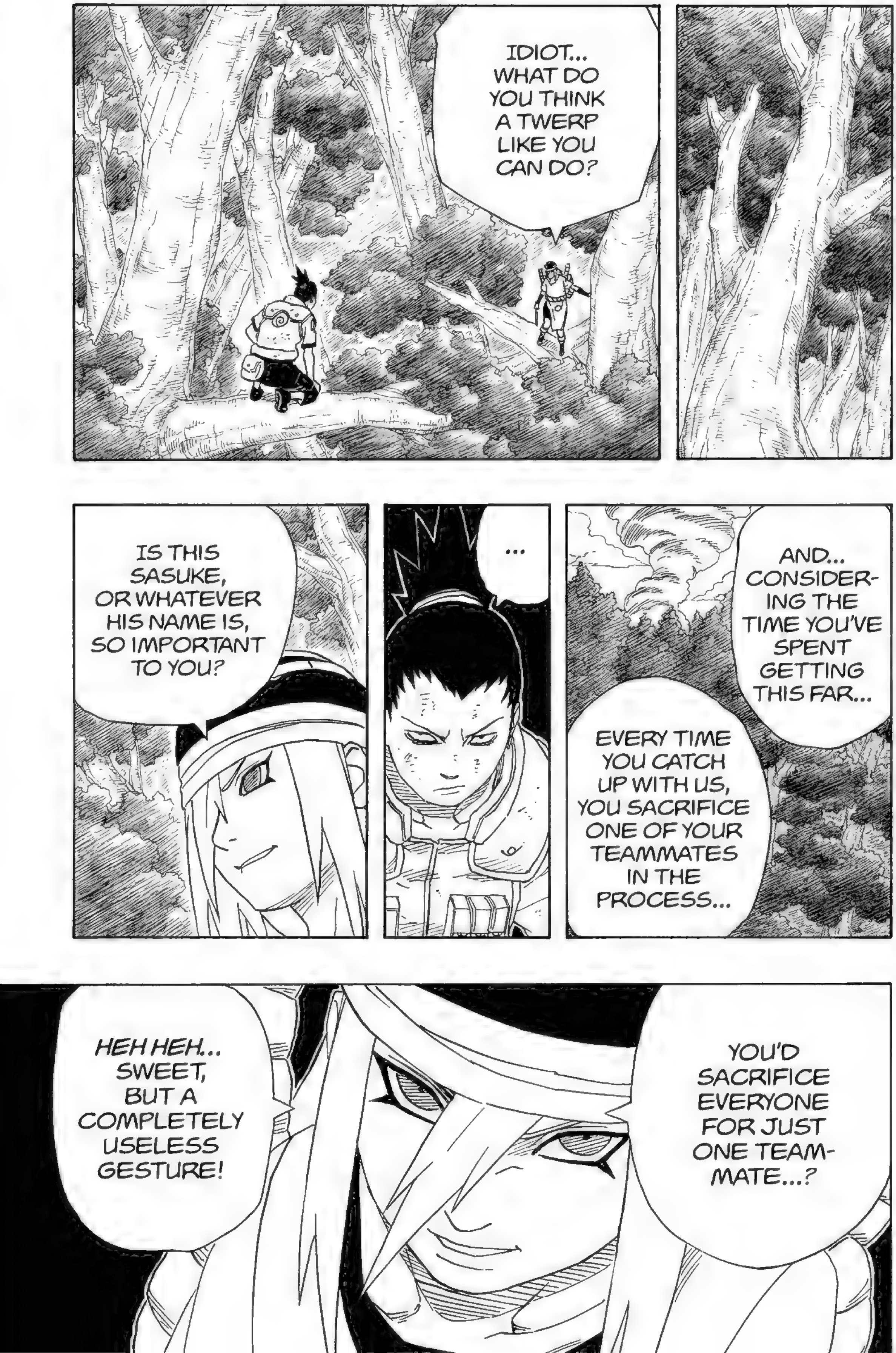

...?!
GRRR
...
YOU...
THOSE EYES...
HMM... HIS... CHAKRA IS PECULIAR.
WHAT'S OROCHIMARU DOING?!
WHAT DOES HE WANT WITH SASUKE?!

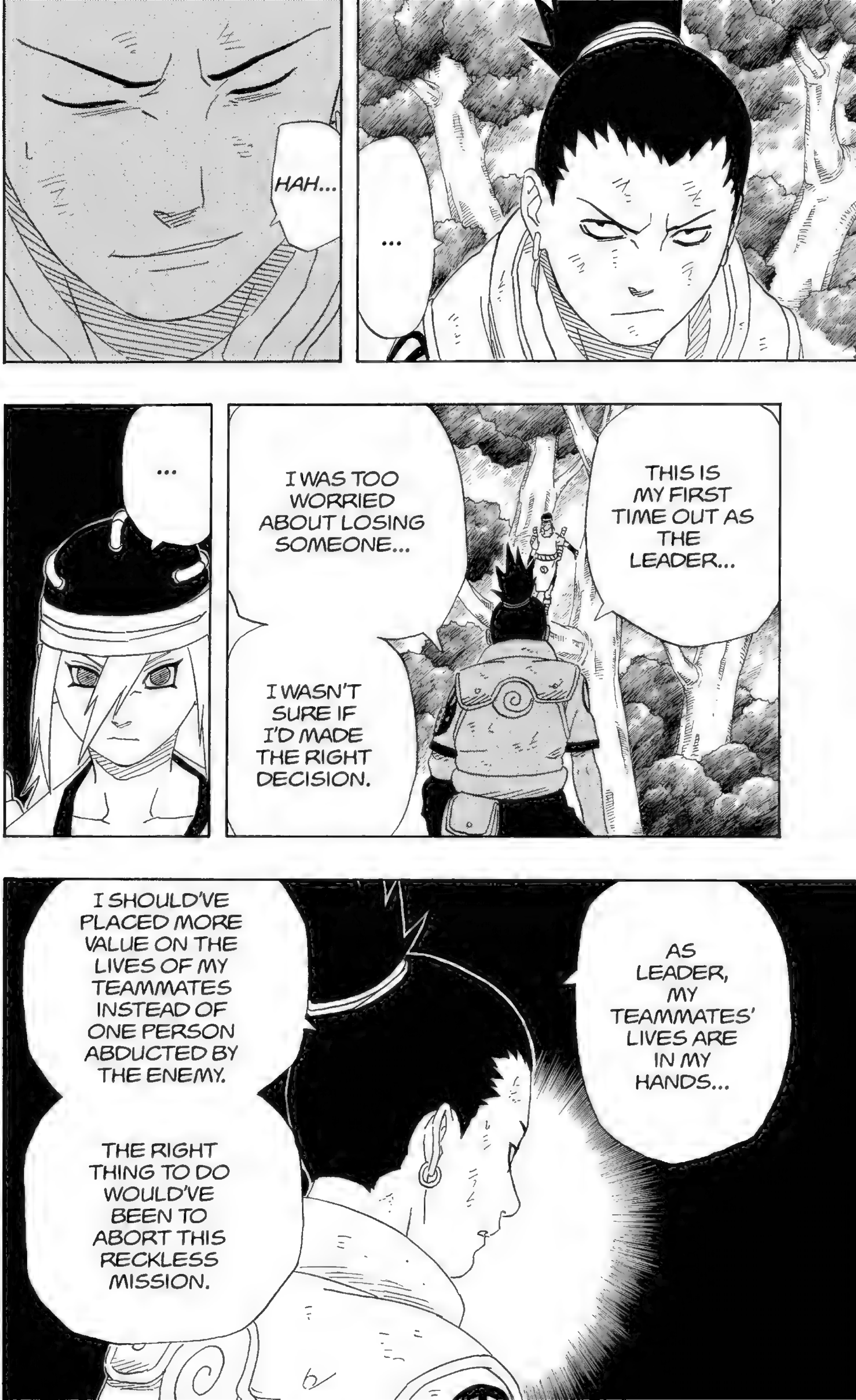
READ THIS WAY


...
LORD OROCHIMARU HAS ALREADY MASTERED THE ART OF IMMORTALITY.
BUT IT TAKES TIME TO LEARN EVERYTHING.
WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH SASUKE?!
IMMORTALITY DOESN'T MEAN YOUR FLESH LIVES ON AS IS...
BEFORE THE BODY DECAYS, ANOTHER STRONG BODY MUST BE OBTAINED AS A VESSEL FOR THE SOUL.
THEN ...
SASUKE ...?!

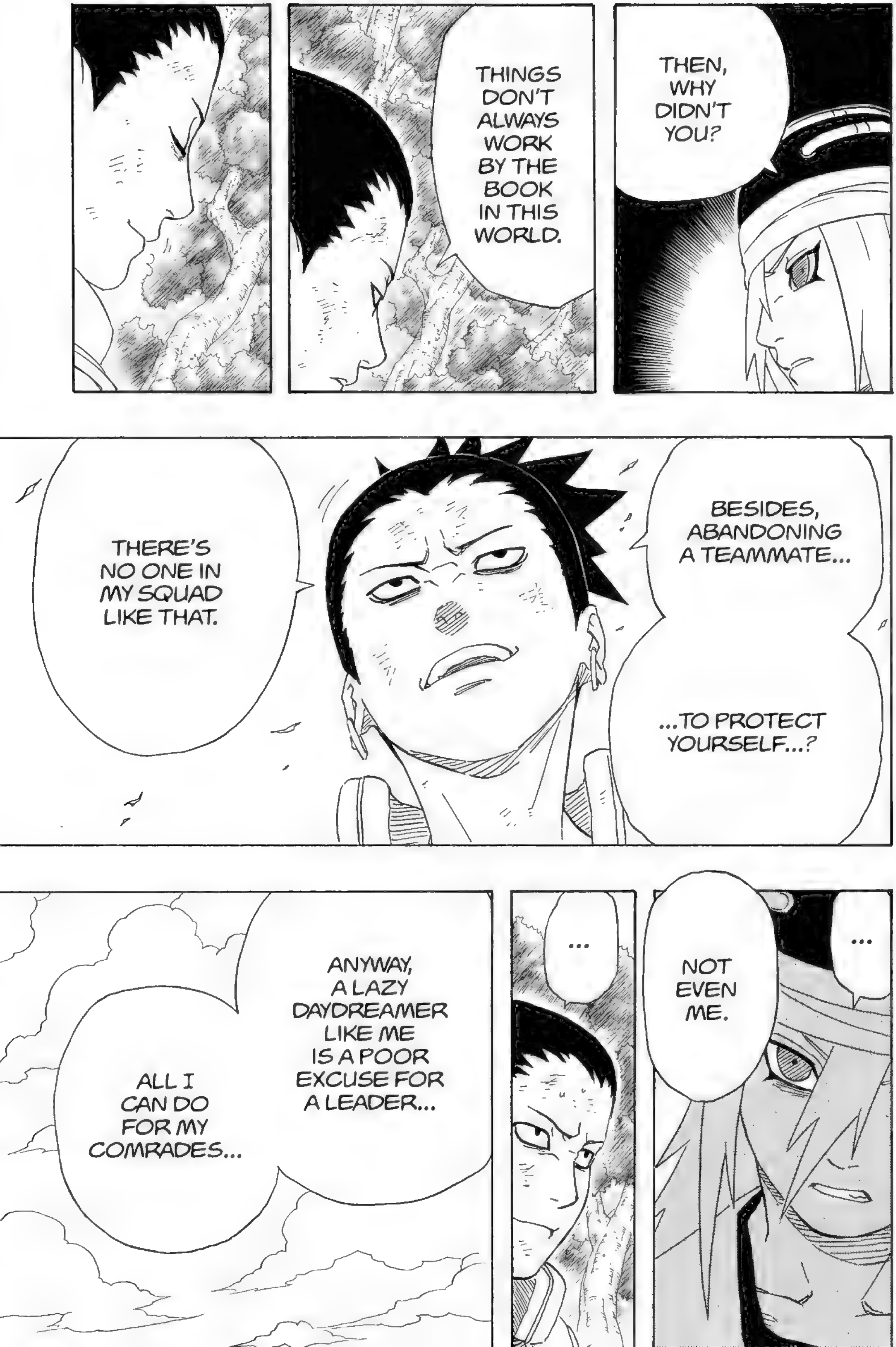

SSH
YES...
PRECISELY ...
GRRR
I WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN...

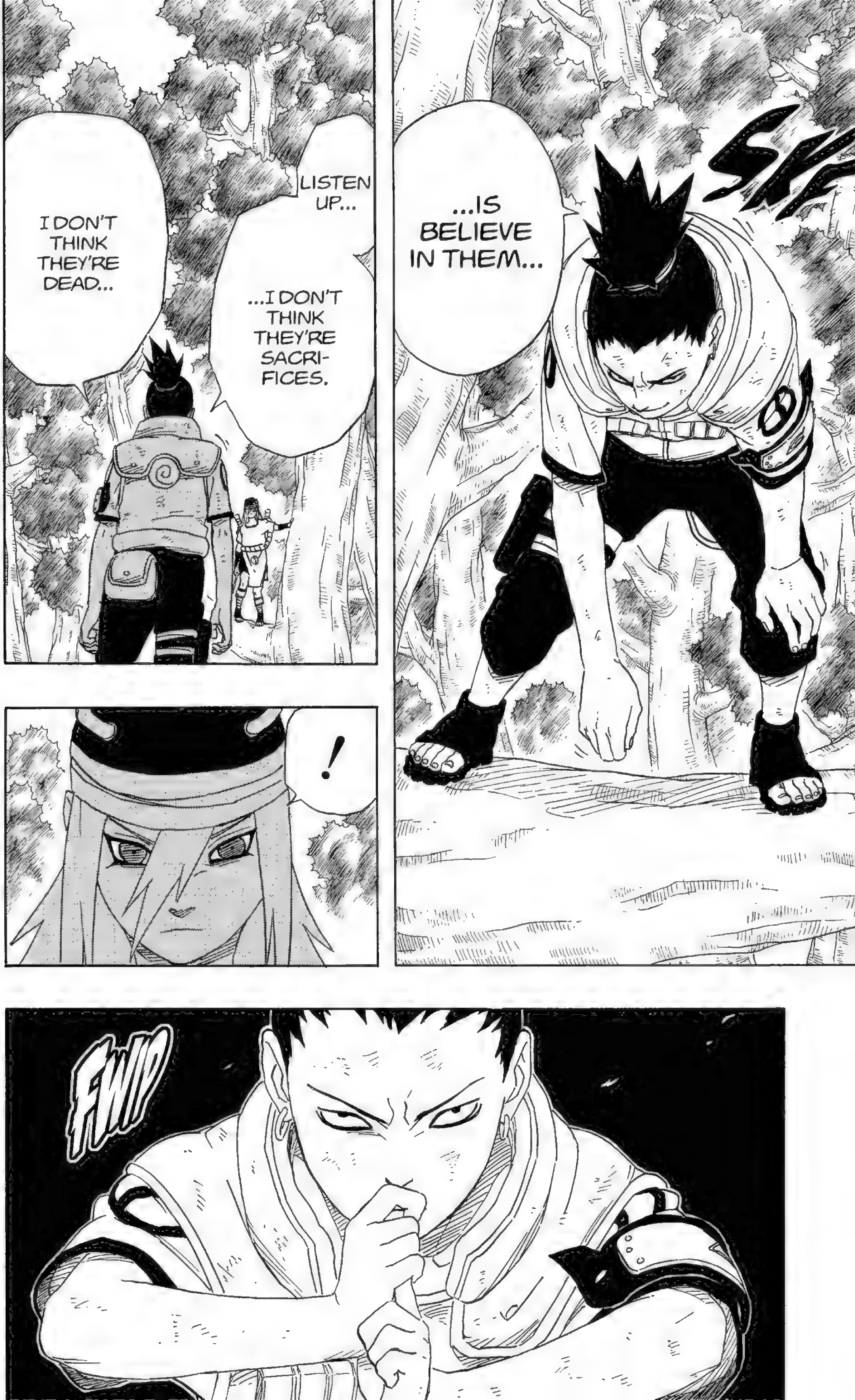
READ THIS WAY

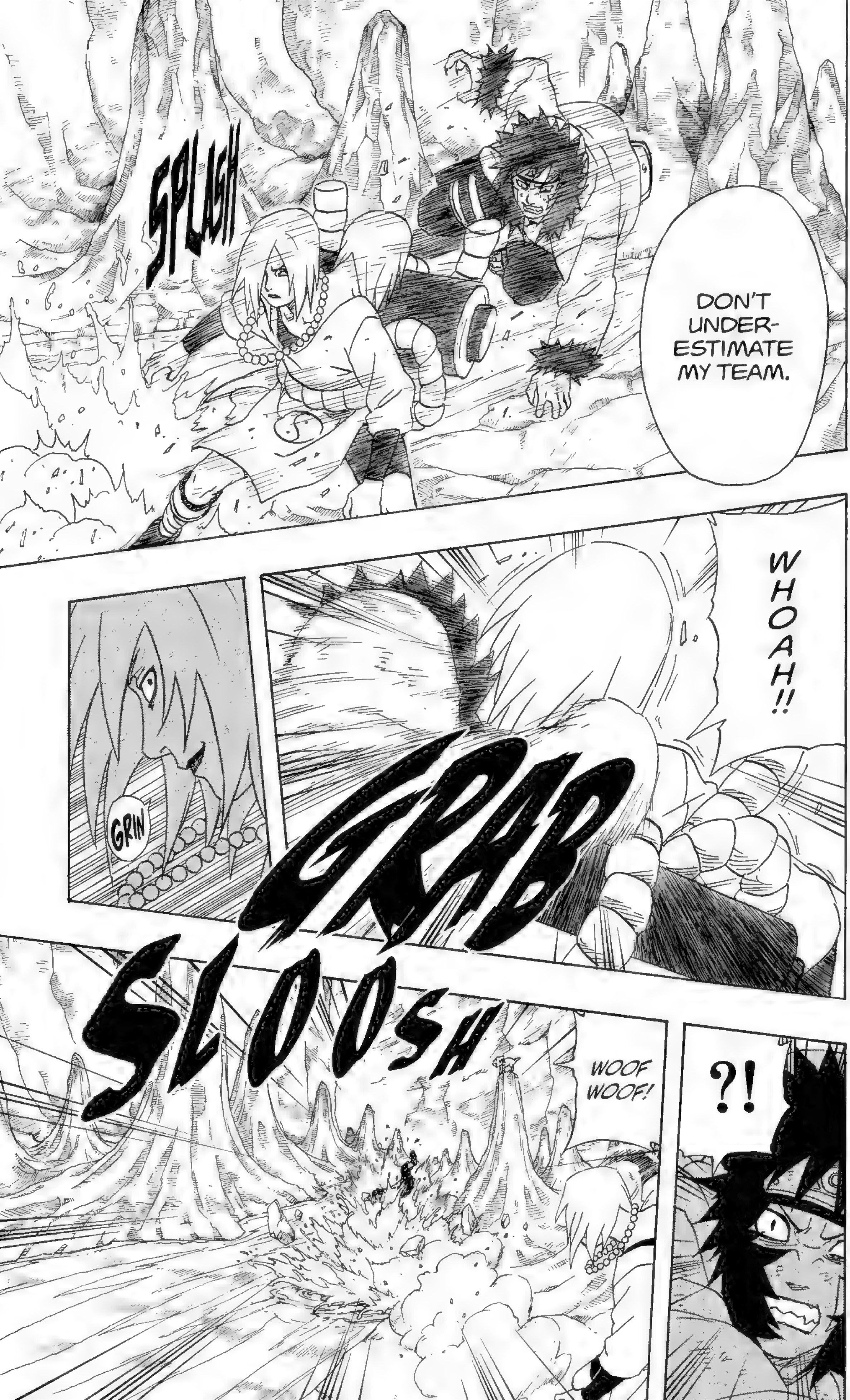

IDIOT... WHAT DO YOU THINK A TWERP LIKE YOU CAN DO?
AND... CONSIDERING THE TIME YOU'VE SPENT GETTING THIS FAR...
EVERY TIME YOU CATCH UP WITH US, YOU SACRIFICE ONE OF YOUR TEAMMATES IN THE PROCESS...
...
IS THIS SASUKE, OR WHATEVER HIS NAME IS, SO IMPORTANT TO YOU?
YOU'D SACRIFICE EVERYONE FOR JUST ONE TEAMMATE...?
HEH HEH... SWEET, BUT A COMPLETELY USELESS GESTURE!

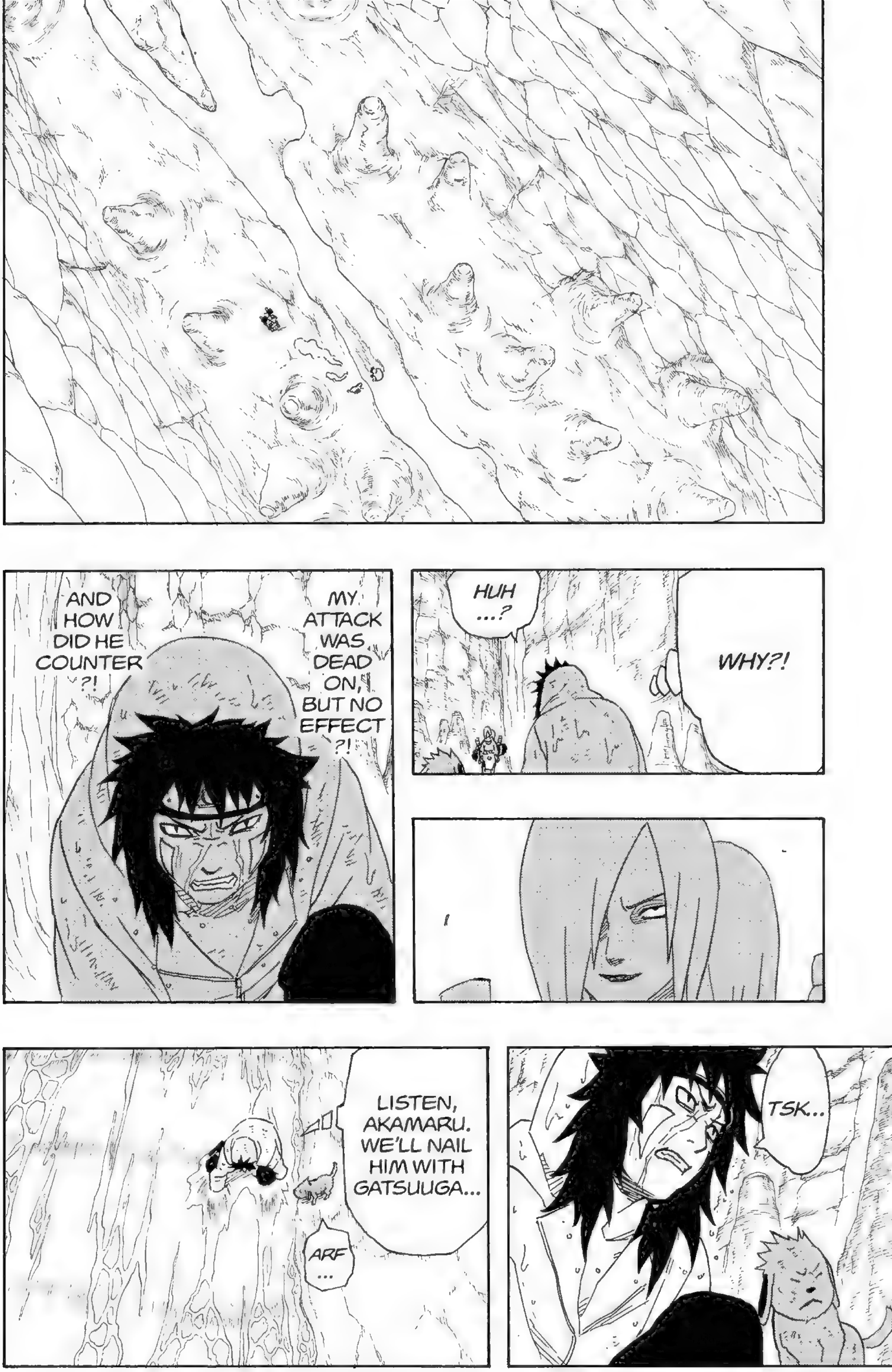

...
HAH...
THIS IS MY FIRST TIME OUT AS THE LEADER...
I WAS TOO WORRIED ABOUT LOSING SOMEONE...
I WASN'T SURE IF I'D MADE THE RIGHT DECISION.
...
AS LEADER, MY TEAMMATES' LIVES ARE IN MY HANDS...
I SHOULD'VE PLACED MORE VALUE ON THE LIVES OF MY TEAMMATES INSTEAD OF ONE PERSON ABDUCTED BY THE ENEMY.
THE RIGHT THING TO DO WOULD'VE BEEN TO ABORT THIS RECKLESS MISSION.

READ THIS WAY

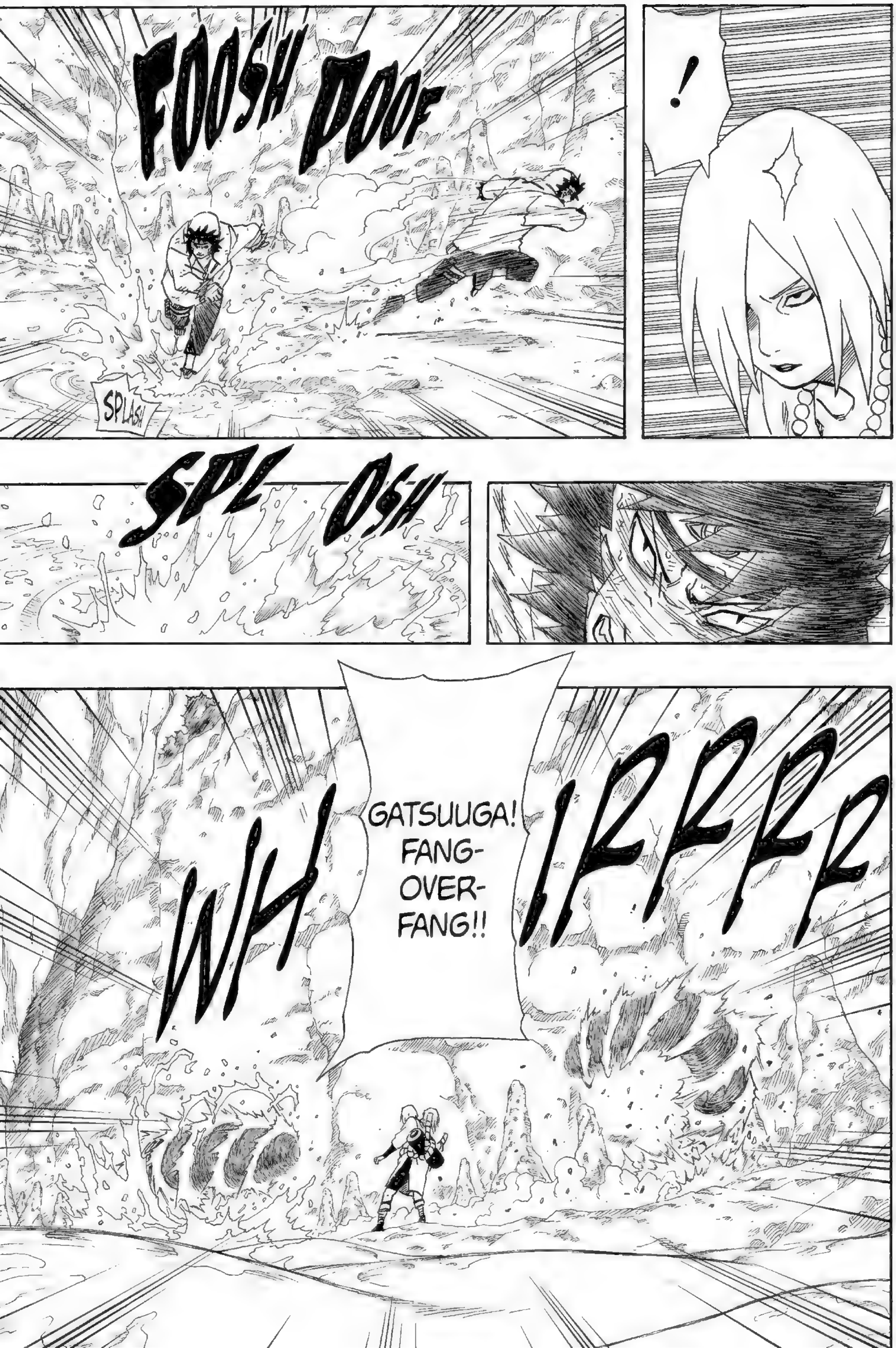

THEN, WHY DIDN'T YOU?
THINGS DON'T ALWAYS WORK BY THE BOOK IN THIS WORLD.
BESIDES, ABANDONING A TEAMMATE...
...TO PROTECT YOURSELF...?
THERE'S NO ONE IN MY SQUAD LIKE THAT.
...
NOT EVEN ME.
...
ANYWAY, A LAZY DAYDREAMER LIKE ME IS A POOR EXCUSE FOR A LEADER...
ALL I CAN DO FOR MY COMRADES...

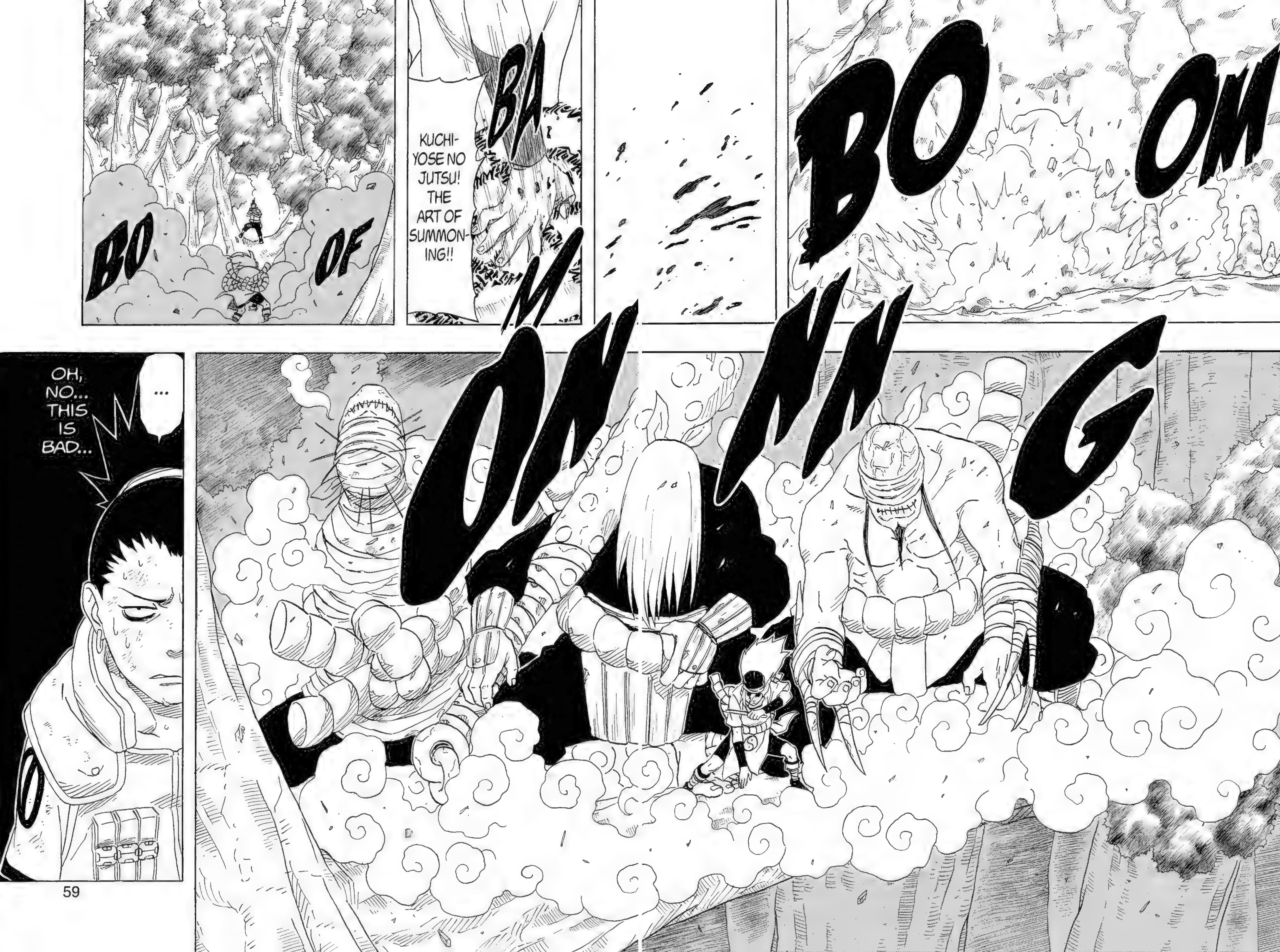

LISTEN UP...
I DON'T THINK THEY'RE DEAD...
...I DON'T THINK THEY'RE SACRIFICES.
...IS BELIEVE IN THEM...
SK
!
FWIP

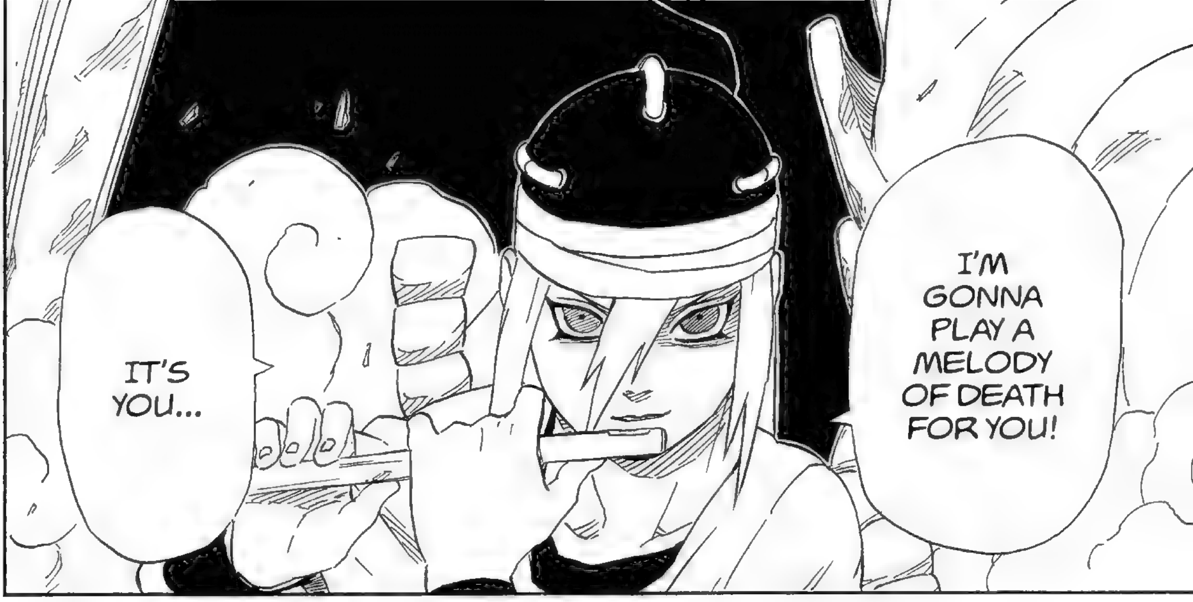

DON'T UNDER-ESTIMATE MY TEAM.
SPLASH
WHOAH!!
GRAB
GRIN
?!
WOOF WOOF!
SLOOSH

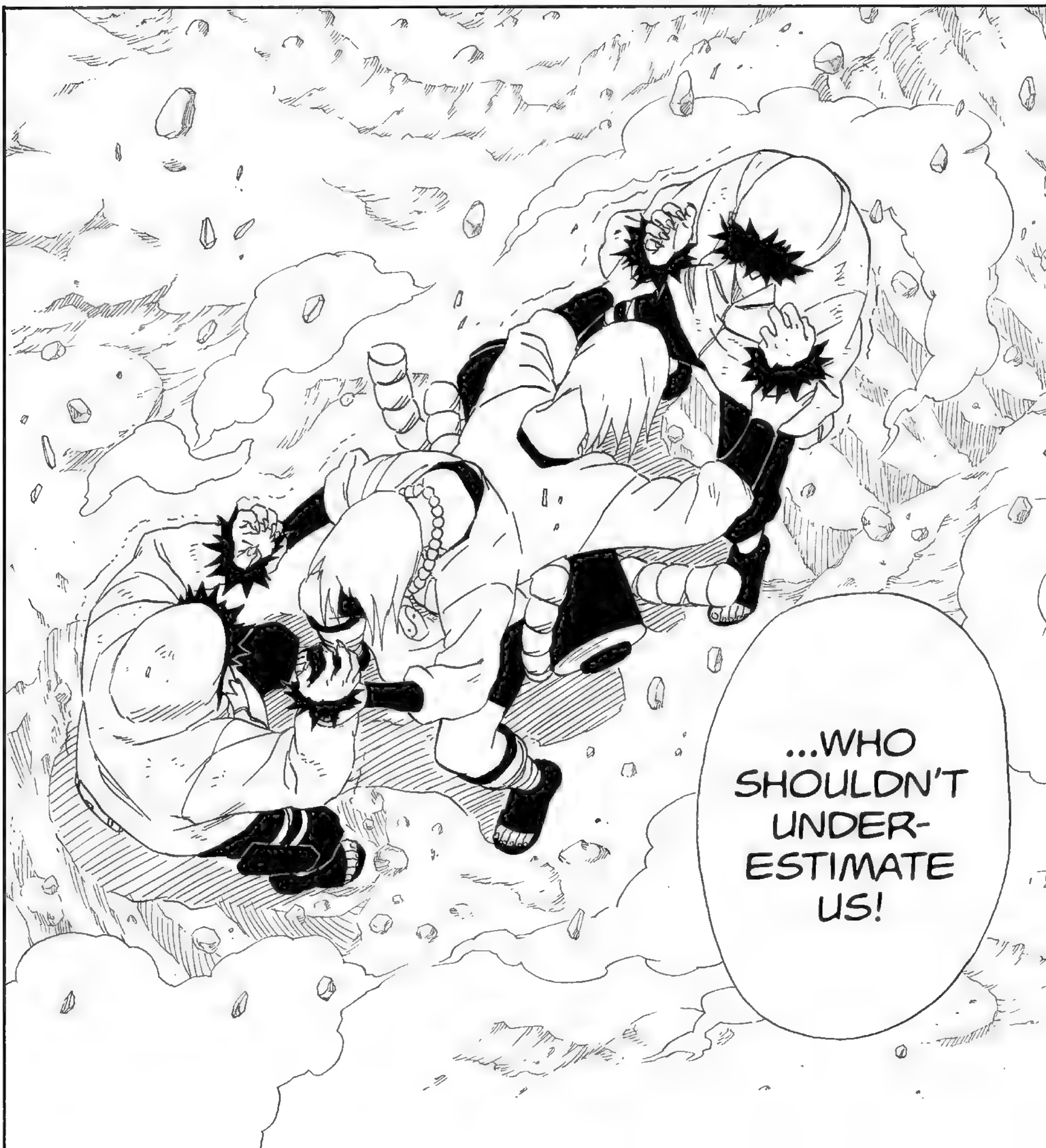

MY ATTACK WAS DEAD ON, BUT NO EFFECT?!
AND HOW DID HE COUNTER?!
WHY?!
HUH...?
TSK...
LISTEN, AKAMARU. WE'LL NAIL HIM WITH GATSUUGA...
ARF...

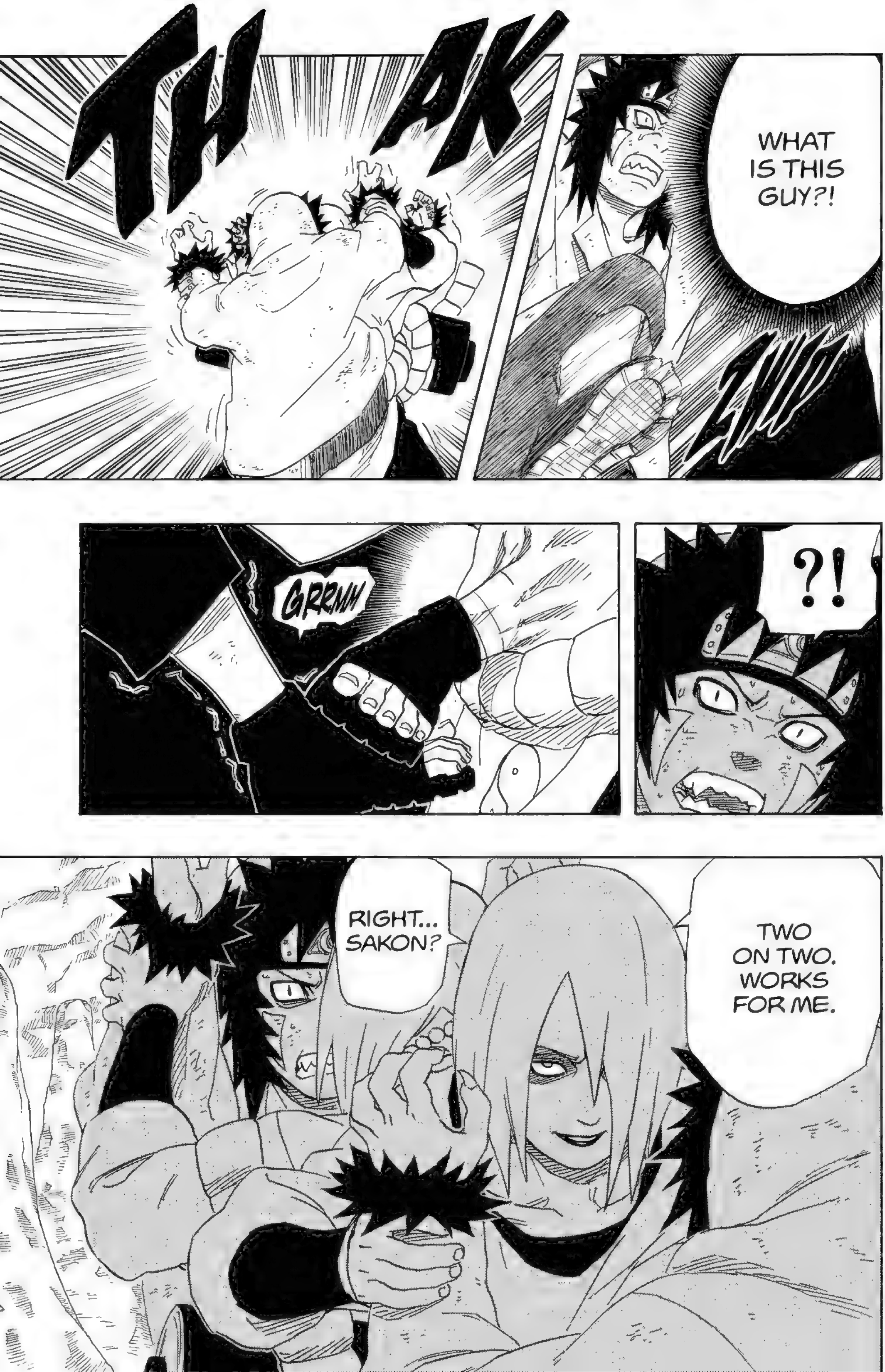
READ THIS WAY

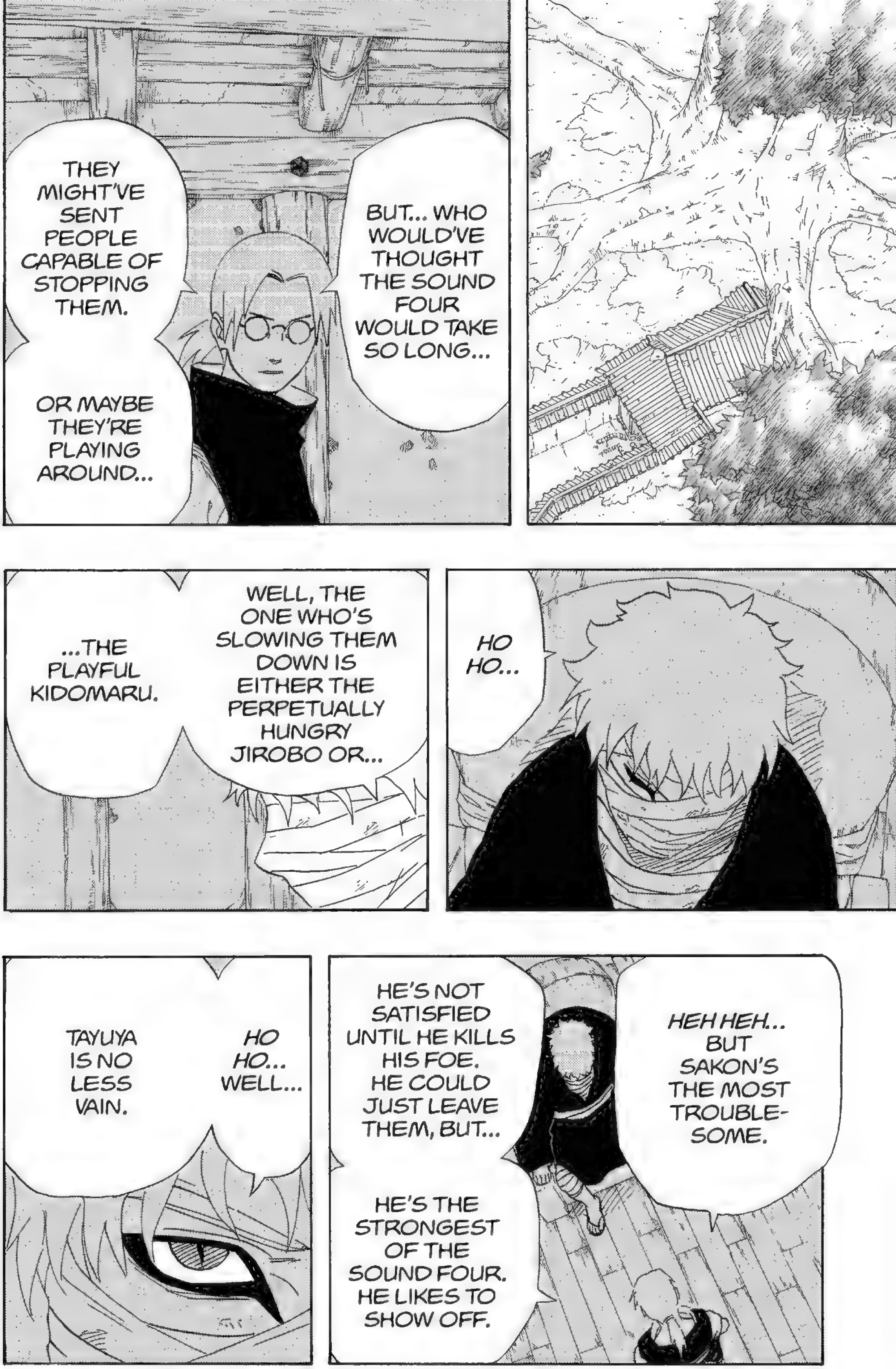

!
FOOSH
POOF
SPLASH
SPL OSH
WH IRRRR
GATSUUGA! FANG-OVER-FANG!!


BO OF
KUCHI-YOSE NO JUTSU! THE ART OF SUMMONING!!
BA M
BO OM
OM MN G
...
OH, NO... THIS IS BAD...

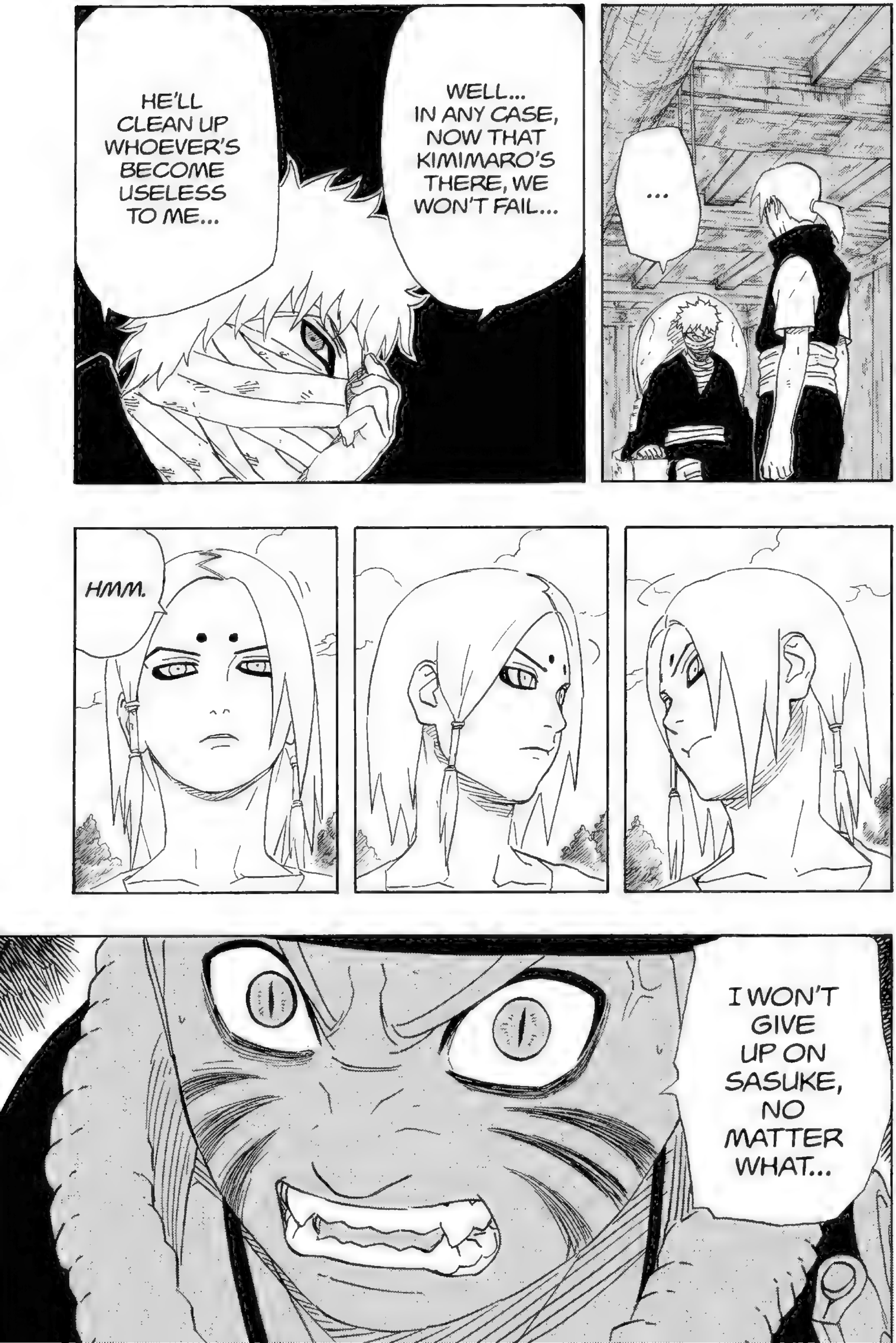

I'M GONNA PLAY A MELODY OF DEATH FOR YOU!
IT'S YOU...

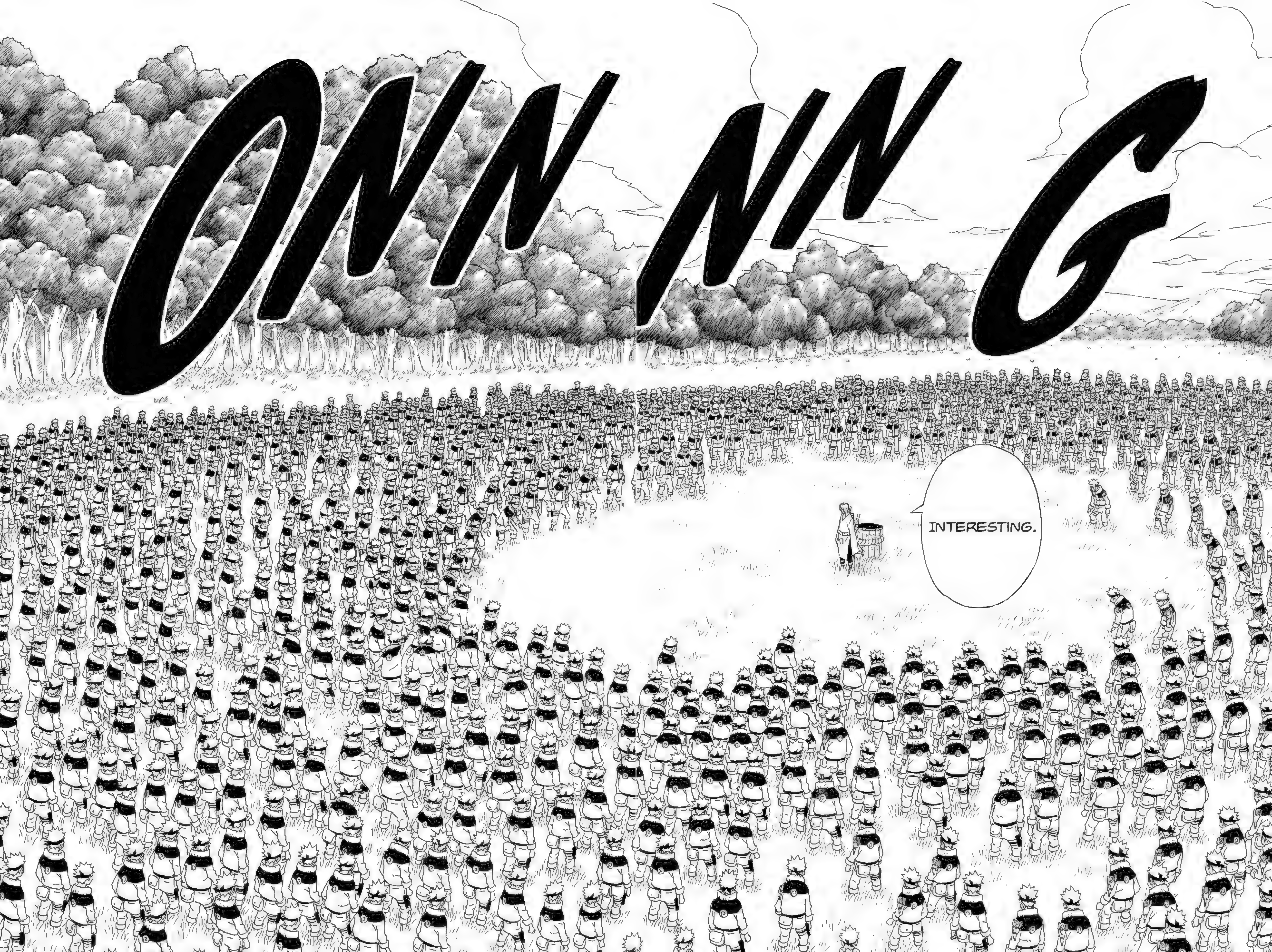

...WHO SHOULDN'T UNDERESTIMATE US!


THWAK!
WHAT IS THIS GUY?!
ZWIP
?!
GRRMM
TWO ON TWO. WORKS FOR ME.
RIGHT... SAKON?


BUT... WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT THE SOUND FOUR WOULD TAKE SO LONG...
THEY MIGHT'VE SENT PEOPLE CAPABLE OF STOPPING THEM.
OR MAYBE THEY'RE PLAYING AROUND...
HO HO...
WELL, THE ONE WHO'S SLOWING THEM DOWN IS EITHER THE PERPETUALLY HUNGRY JIROBO OR...
...THE PLAYFUL KIDOMARU.
HEH HEH... BUT SAKON'S THE MOST TROUBLESOME.
HE'S NOT SATISFIED UNTIL HE KILLS HIS FOE. HE COULD JUST LEAVE THEM, BUT...
HE'S THE STRONGEST OF THE SOUND FOUR. HE LIKES TO SHOW OFF.
HO HO... WELL...
TAYUYA IS NO LESS VAIN.

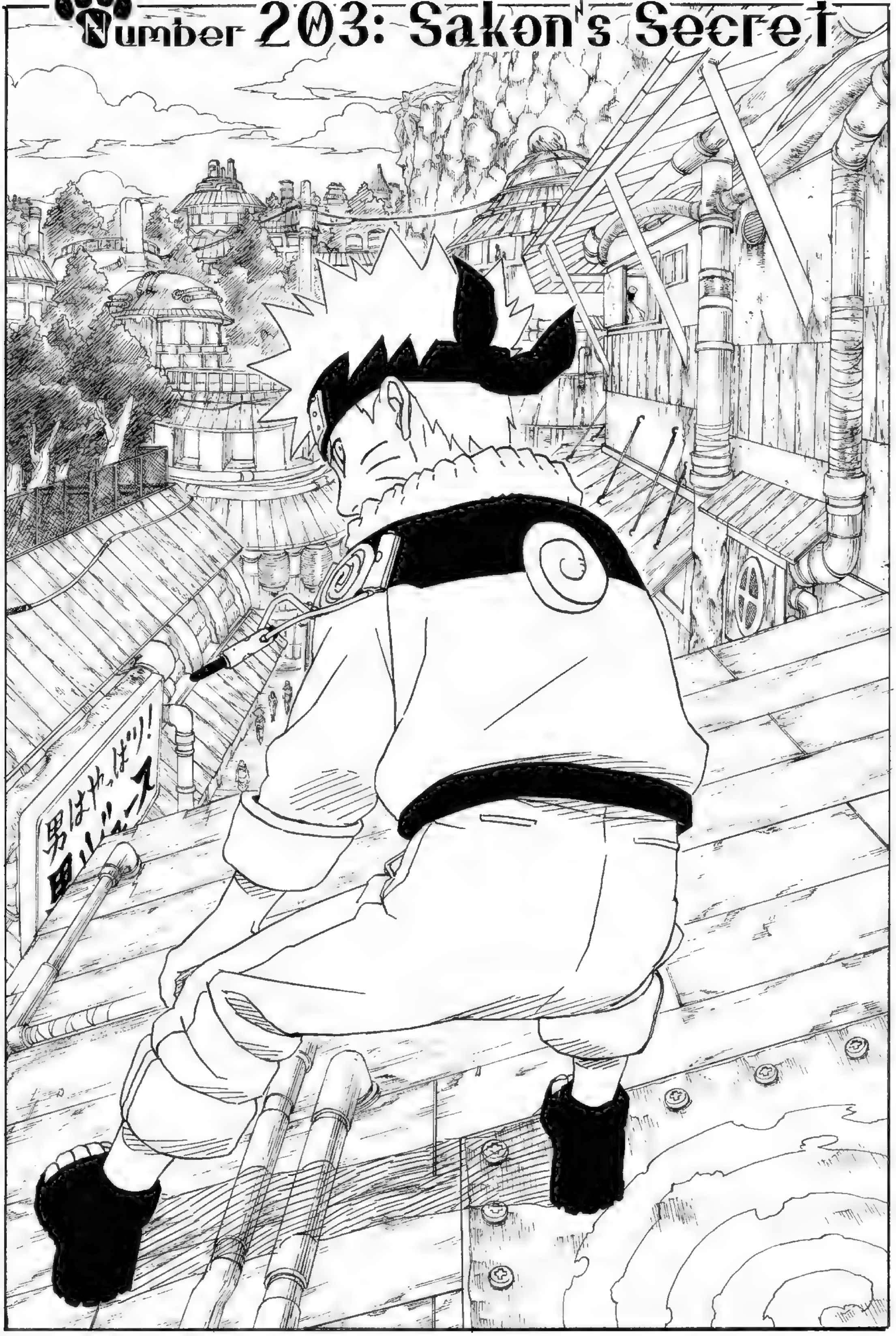
READ THIS WAY

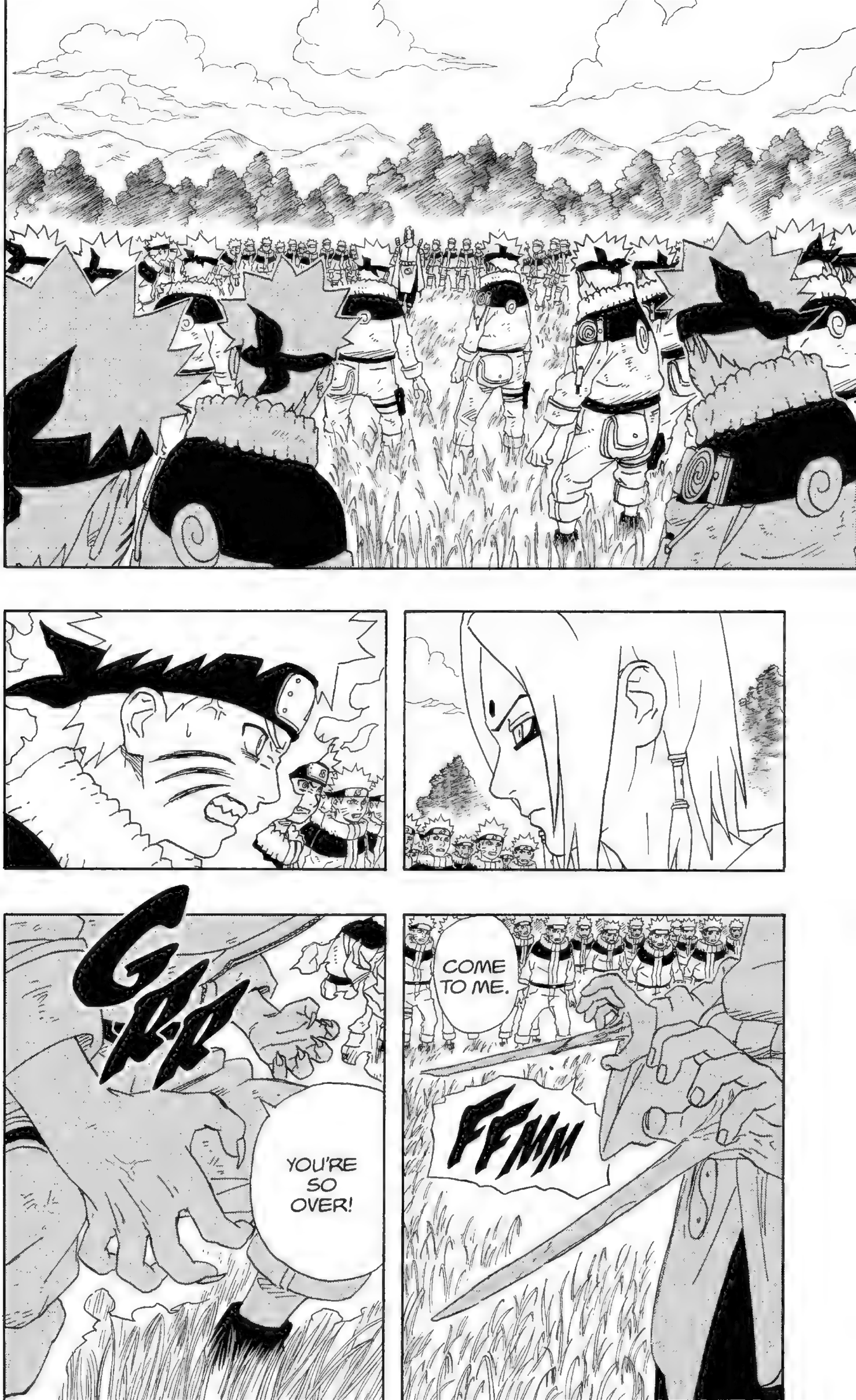

...
WELL... IN ANY CASE, NOW THAT KIMIMARO'S THERE, WE WON'T FAIL...
HE'LL CLEAN UP WHOEVER'S BECOME USELESS TO ME...
HMM.
I WON'T GIVE UP ON SASUKE, NO MATTER WHAT...

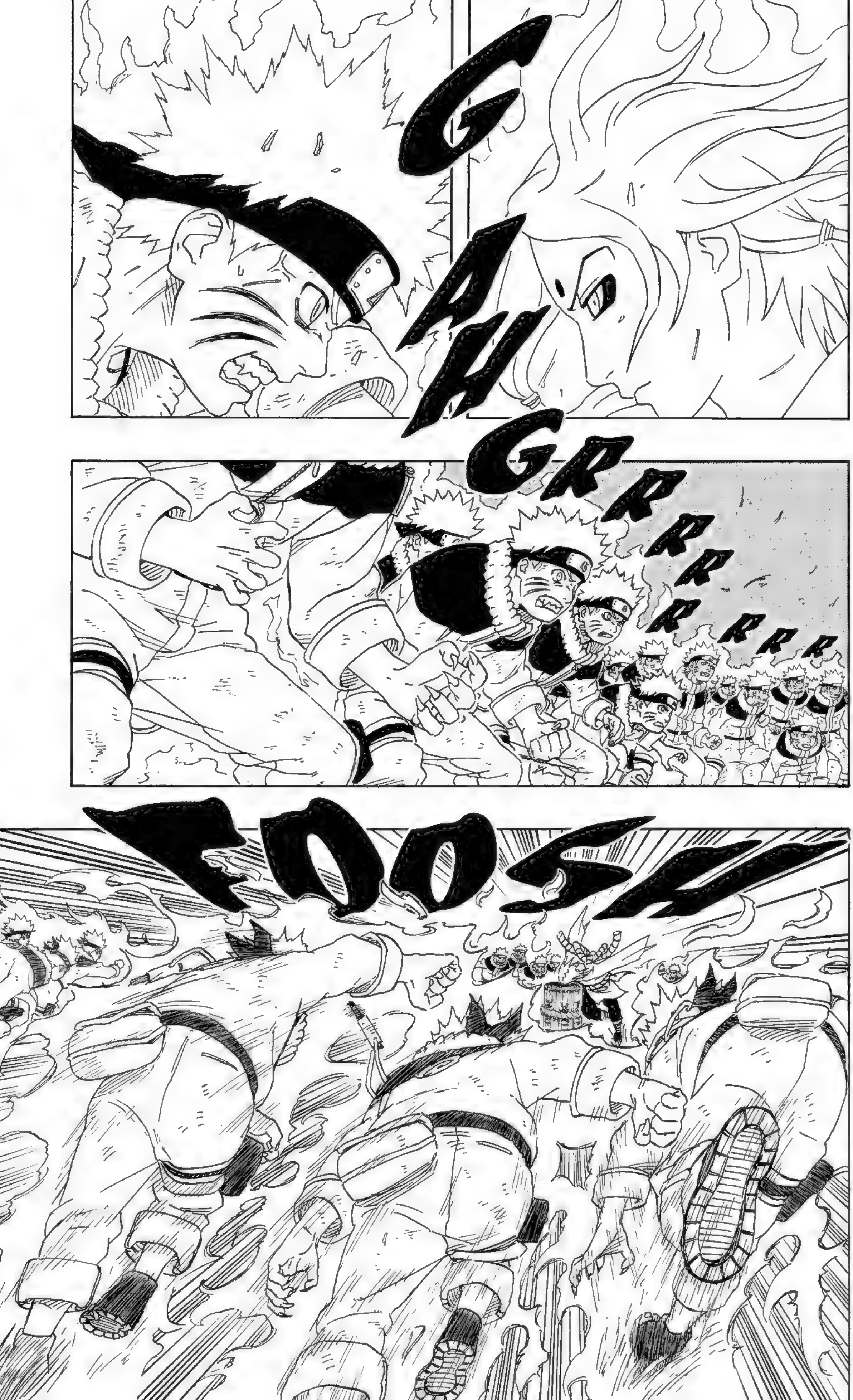

ONN NN G
INTERESTING.

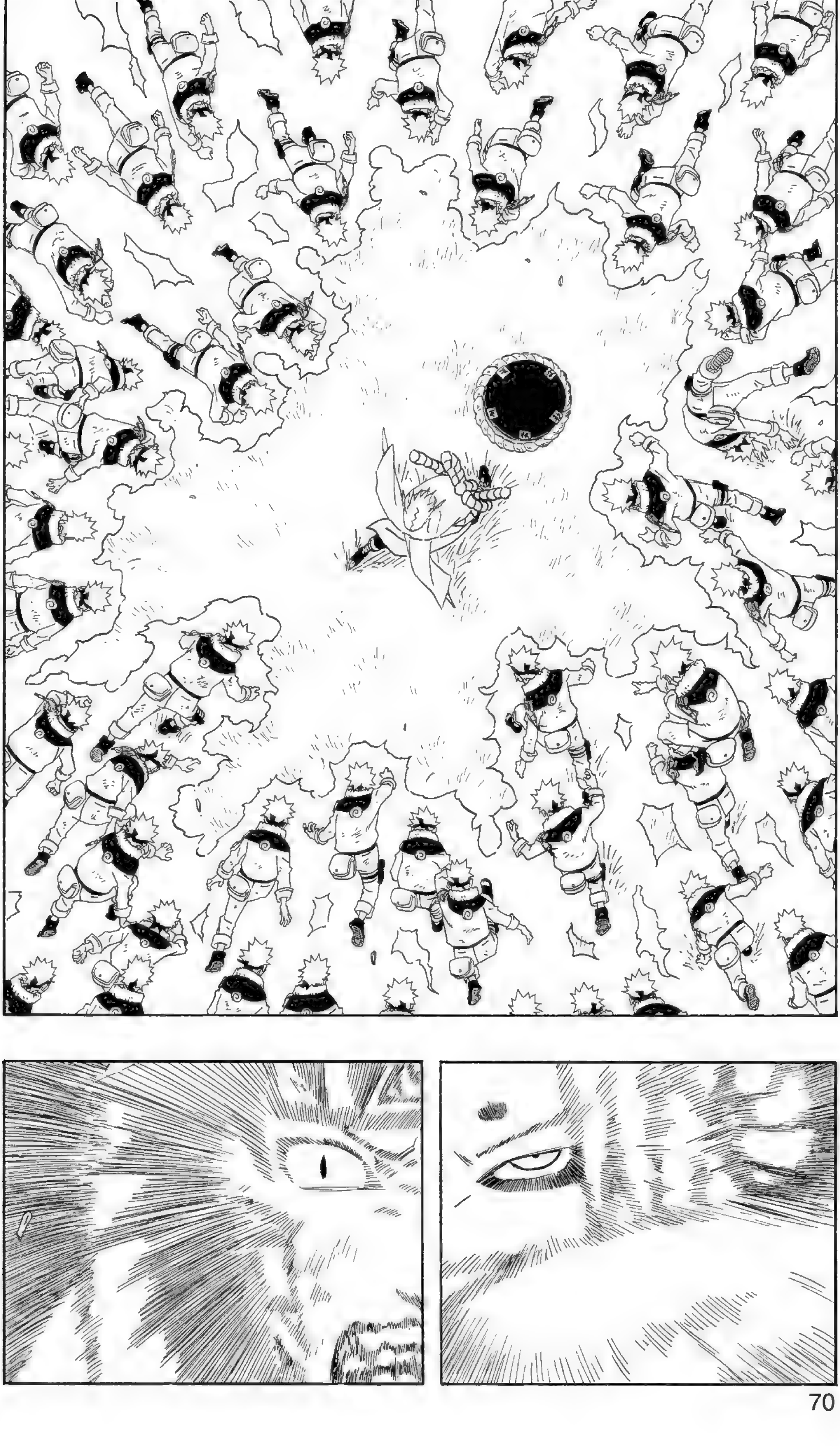
NARUTO™

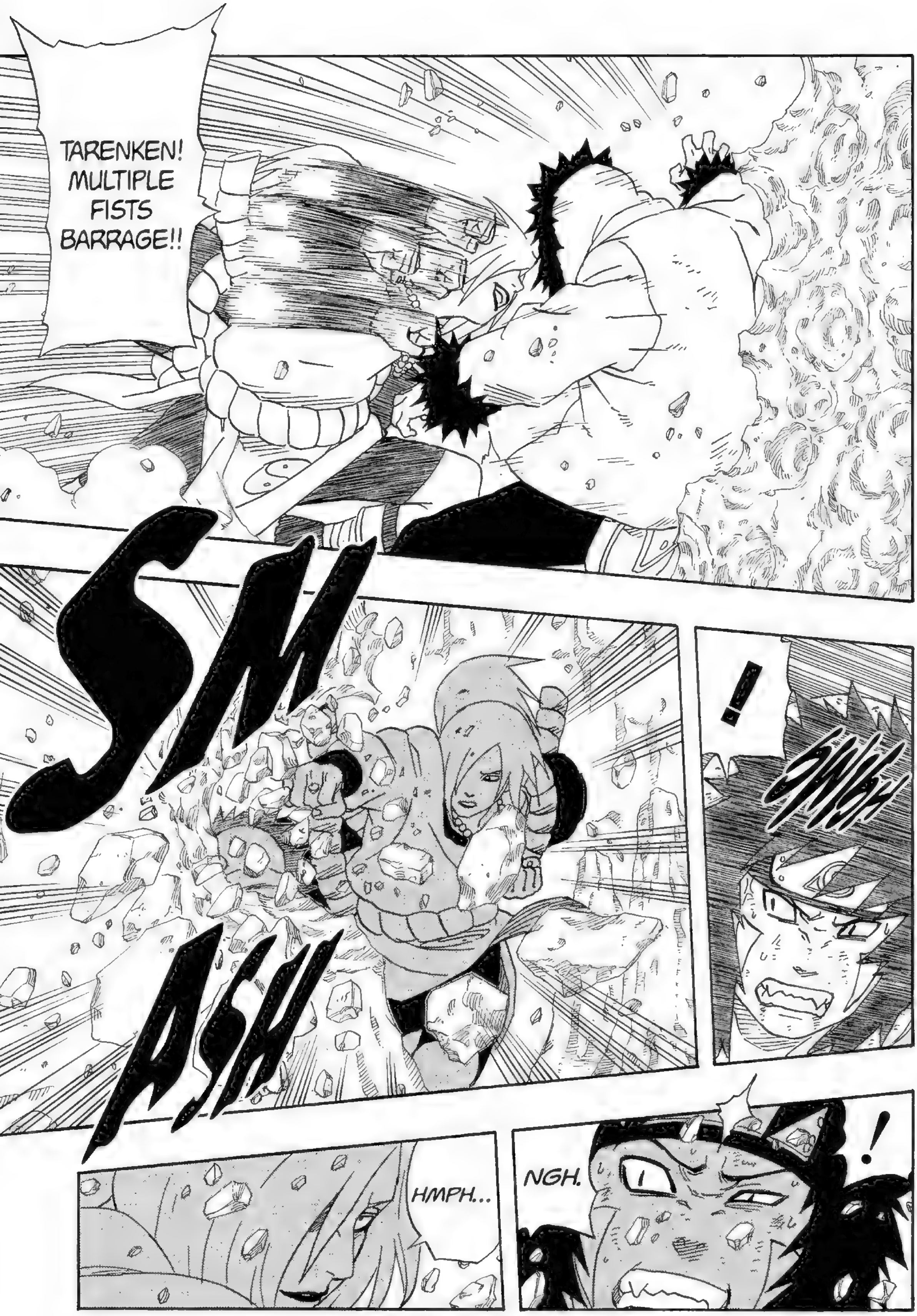
Number 203: Sakon's Secret

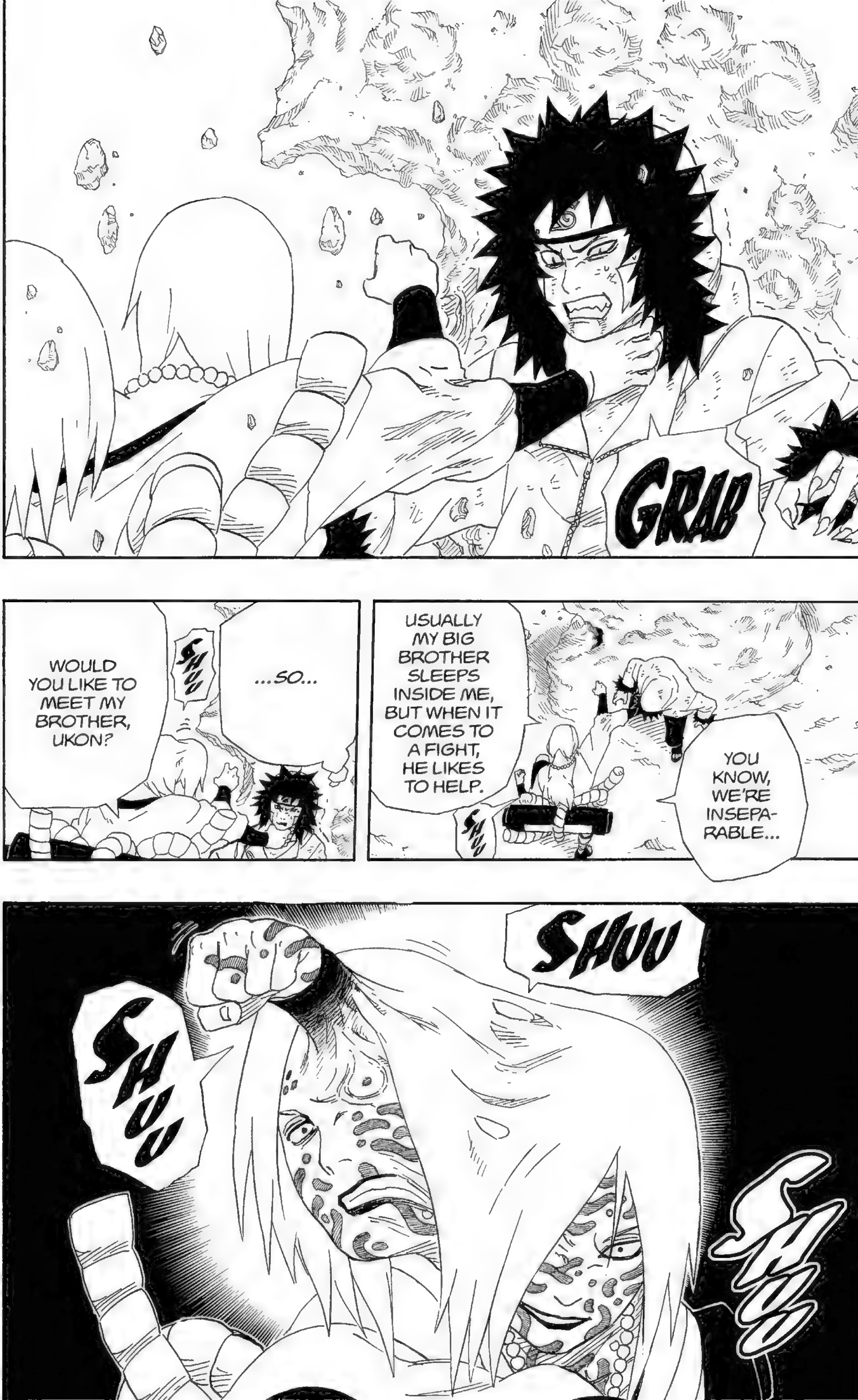



COME TO ME.
FFMM
GRR
YOU'RE SO OVER!

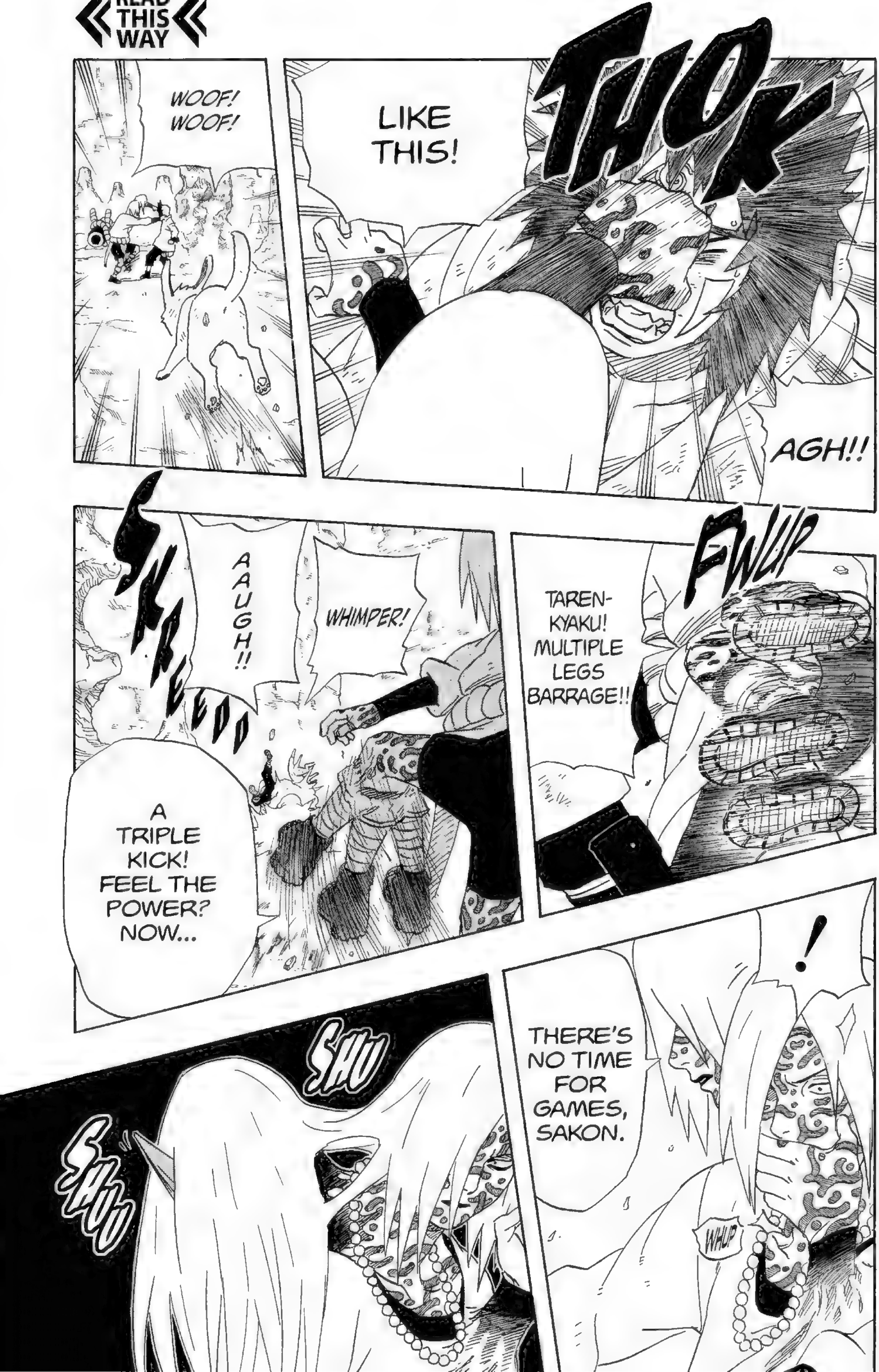

GAH
GRRRRRRRR
FOOSH

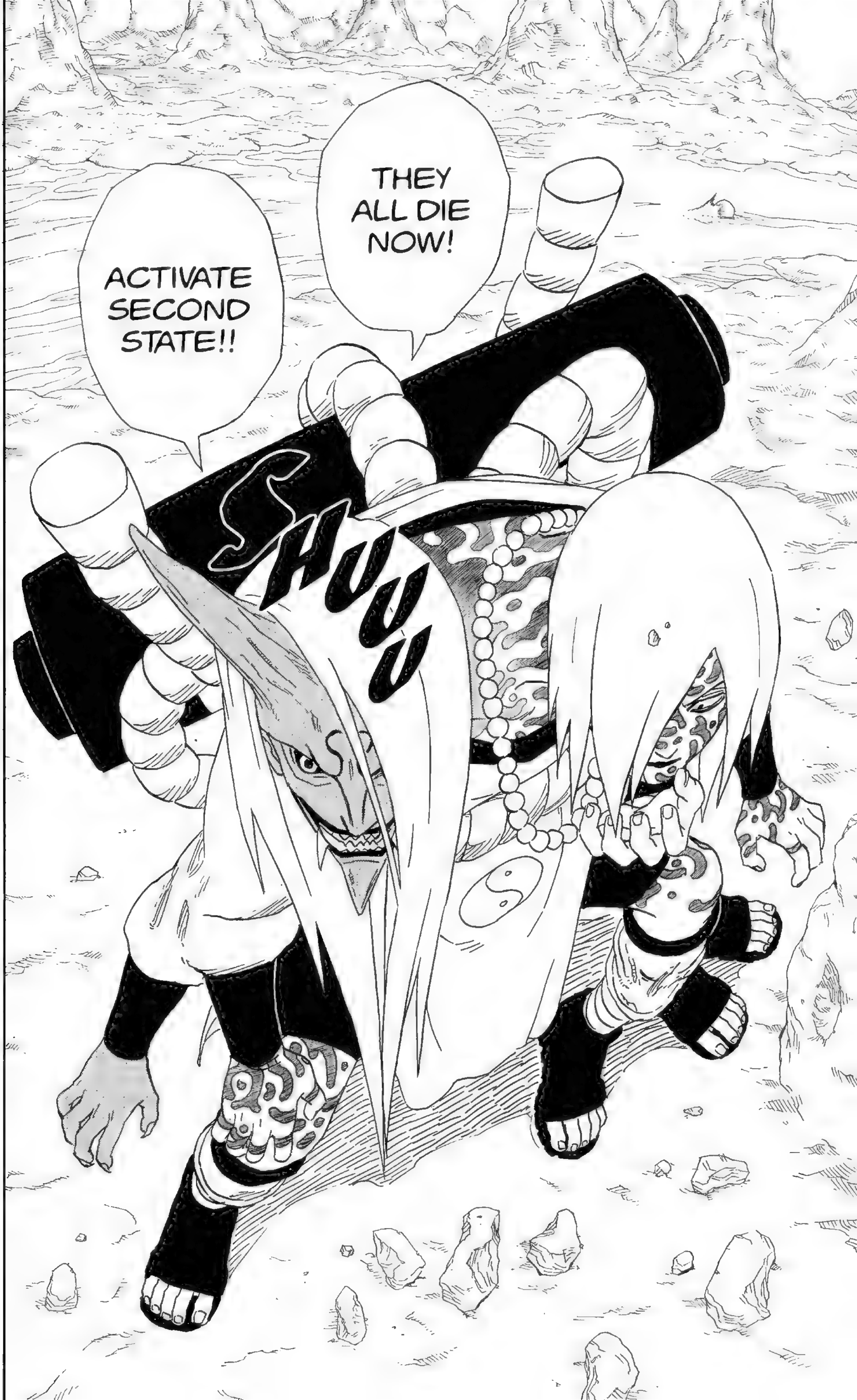



TARENKEN! MULTIPLE FISTS BARRAGE!!
SMASH
!
SWISH!
!
NGH.
HMPH...

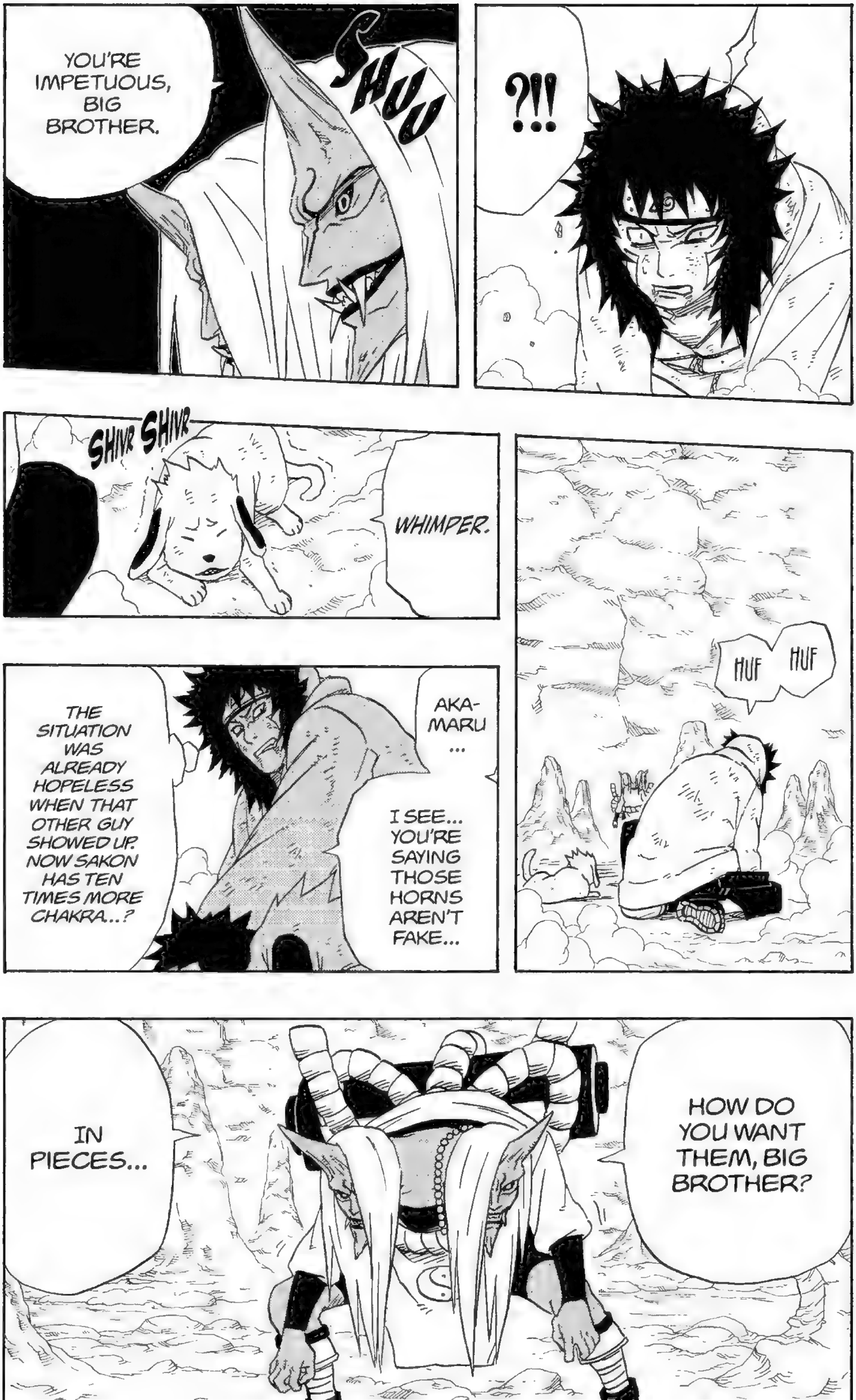

GRAB
YOU KNOW, WE'RE INSEPARABLE...
USUALLY MY BIG BROTHER SLEEPS INSIDE ME, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO A FIGHT, HE LIKES TO HELP.
SHUU
...SO...
SHUU
WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET MY BROTHER, UKON?
SHUU
SHUU
SHUU

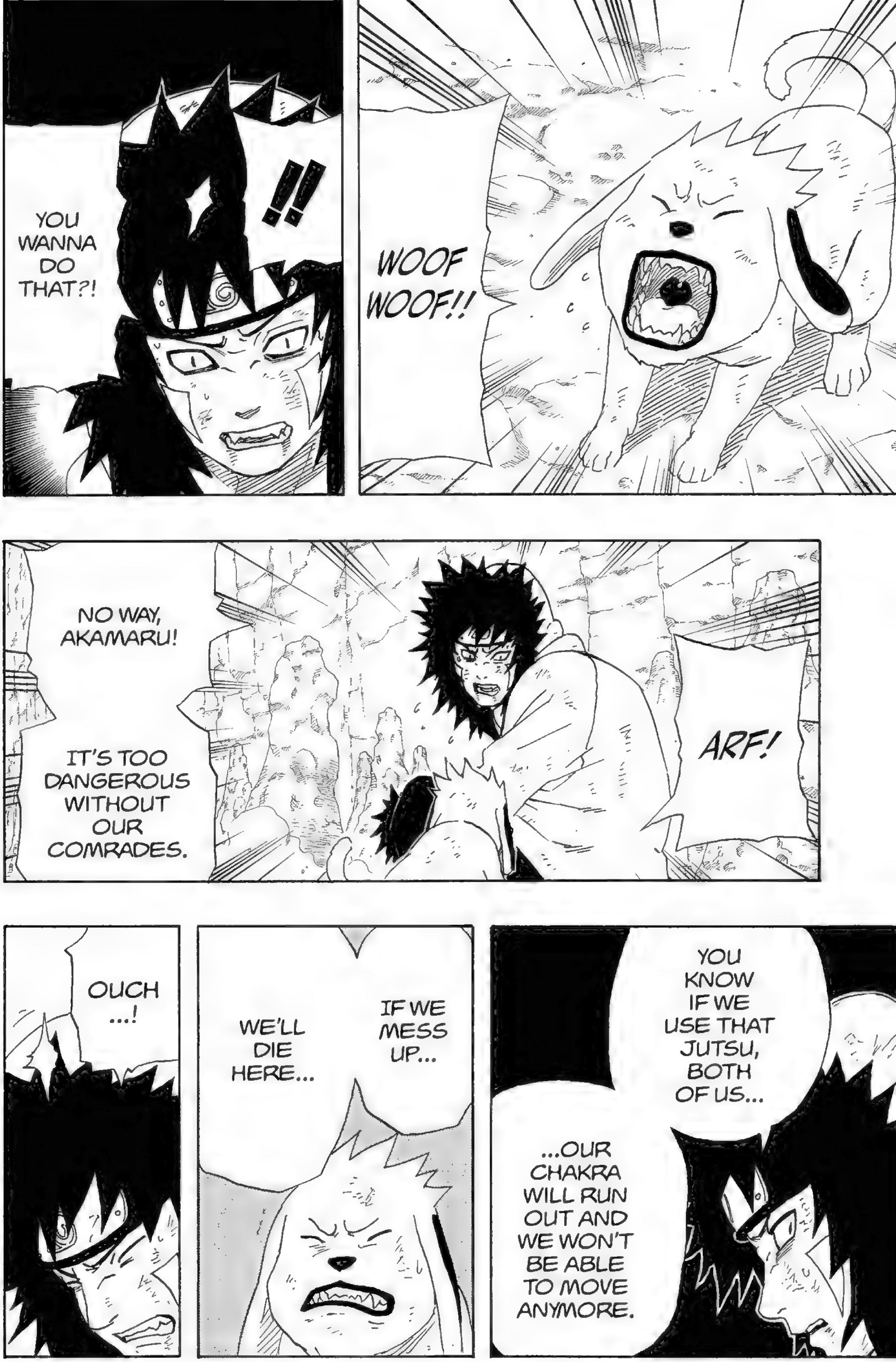
READ THIS WAY


THOK
LIKE THIS!
AGH!!
WOOF! WOOF!
FWUP
TAREN-KYAKU! MULTIPLE LEGS BARRAGE!!
WHIMPER!
AAUGH!!
SHREEDD
A TRIPLE KICK! FEEL THE POWER? NOW...
!
THERE'S NO TIME FOR GAMES, SAKON.
WHUP
SHU
SHHU

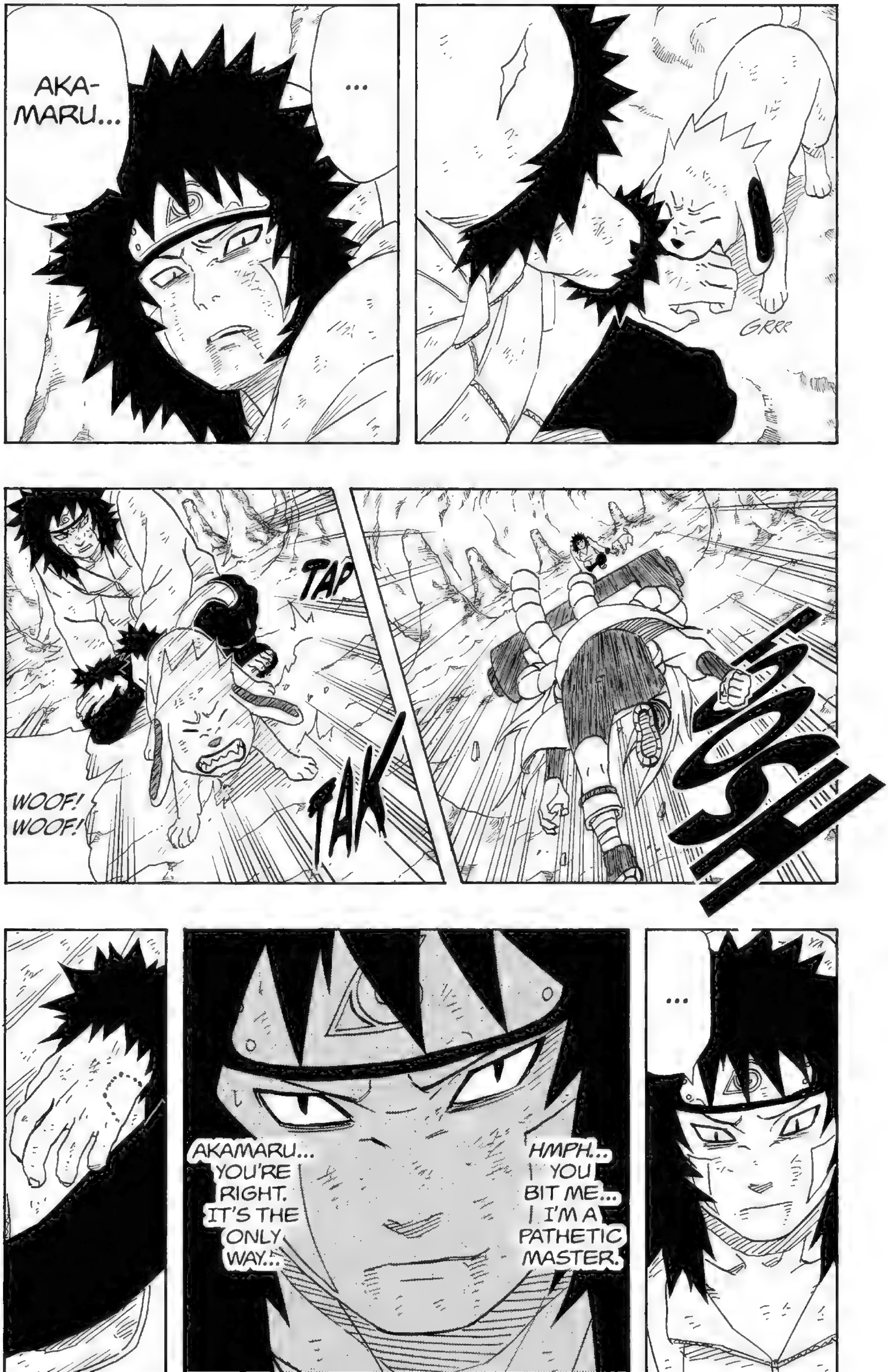

THEY ALL DIE NOW!
ACTIVATE SECOND STATE!!
SHUUU

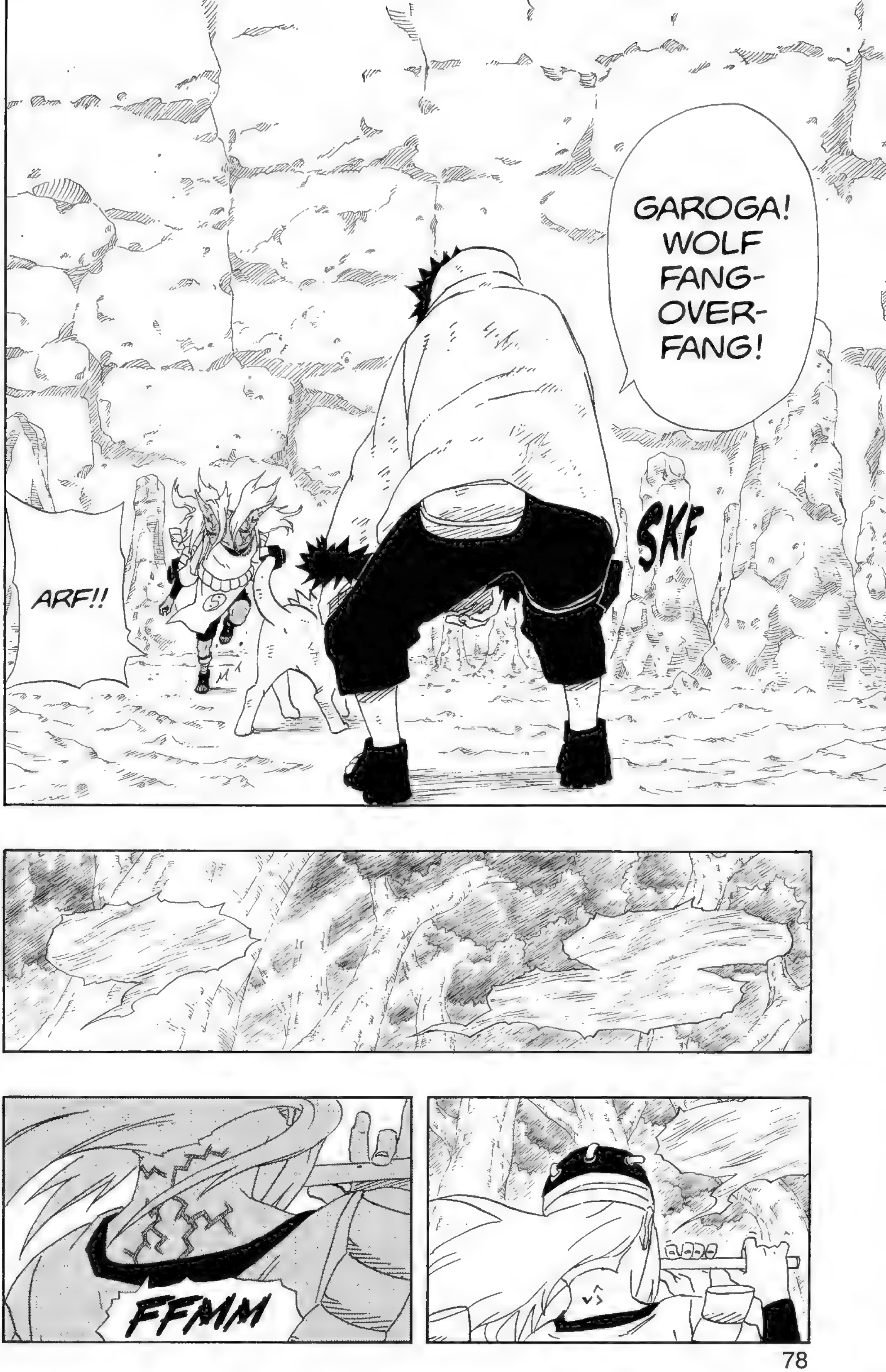
READ THIS WAY


?!!
YOU'RE IMPETUOUS, BIG BROTHER.
SHUU
HUF
HUF
WHIMPER.
SHIVR SHIVR
AKAMARU...
I SEE... YOU'RE SAYING THOSE HORNS AREN'T FAKE...
THE SITUATION WAS ALREADY HOPELESS WHEN THAT OTHER GUY SHOWED UP. NOW SAKON HAS TEN TIMES MORE CHAKRA...?
HOW DO YOU WANT THEM, BIG BROTHER?
IN PIECES...

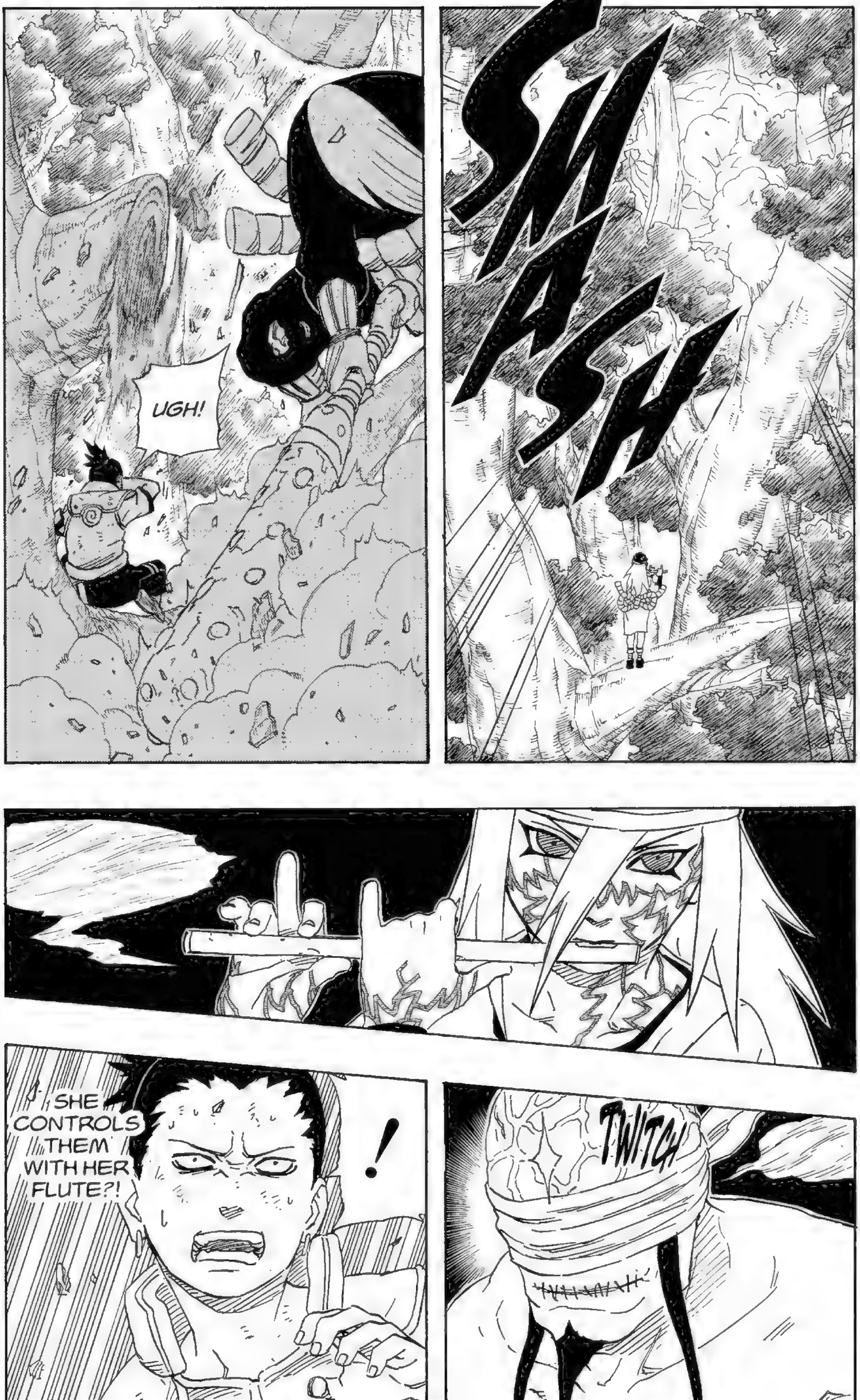

WOOF WOOF!!
!!
YOU WANNA DO THAT?!
ARF!
NO WAY, AKAMARU!
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS WITHOUT OUR COMRADES.
YOU KNOW IF WE USE THAT JUTSU, BOTH OF US...
...OUR CHAKRA WILL RUN OUT AND WE WON'T BE ABLE TO MOVE ANYMORE.
IF WE MESS UP...
WE'LL DIE HERE...
OUCH ...!

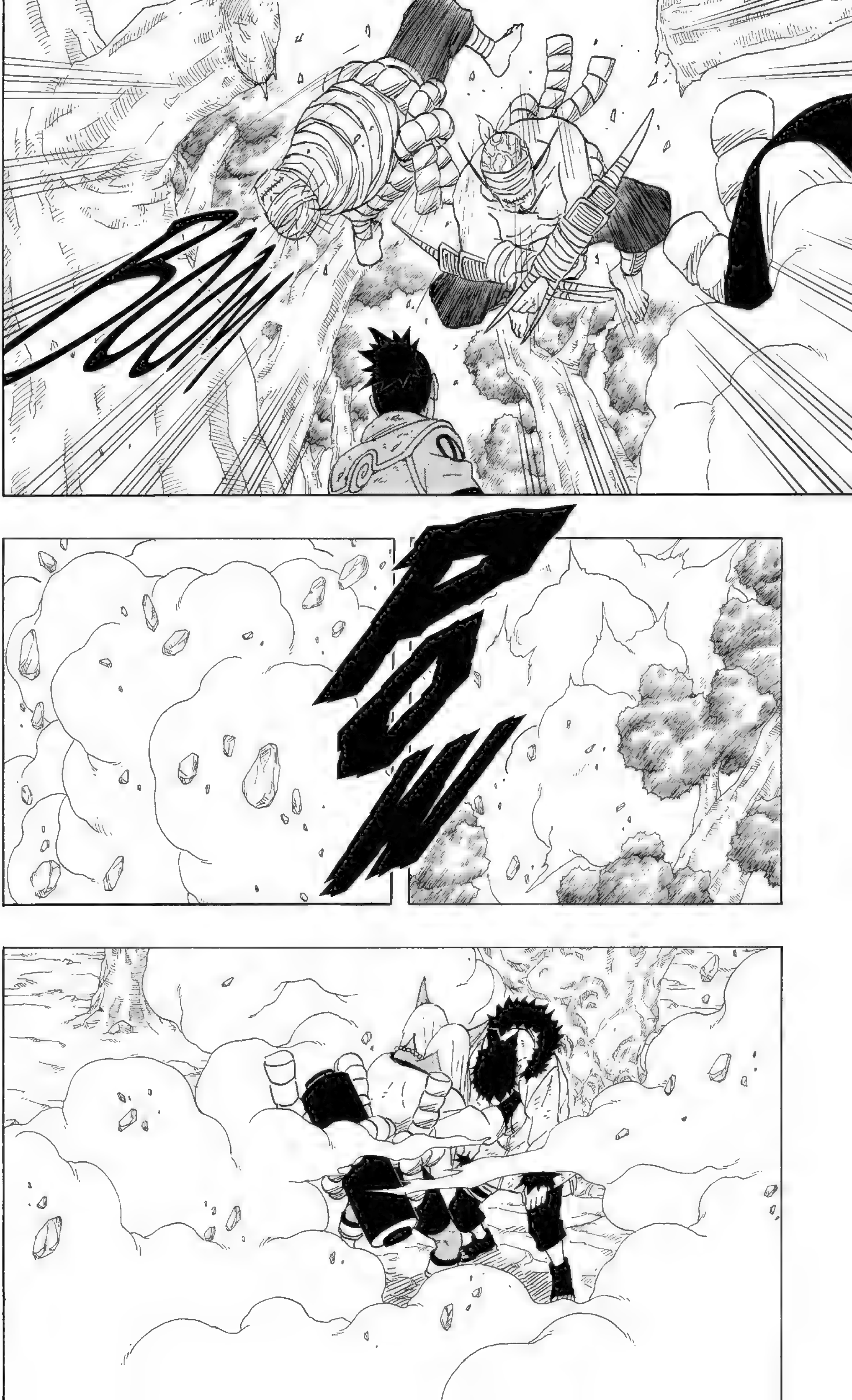
READ THIS WAY


GRRR
...
AKA-MARU...
WHOOSH
TAP
TAK
WOOF! WOOF!
...
HMPH... YOU BIT ME... I'M A PATHETIC MASTER.
AKAMARU... YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S THE ONLY WAY...

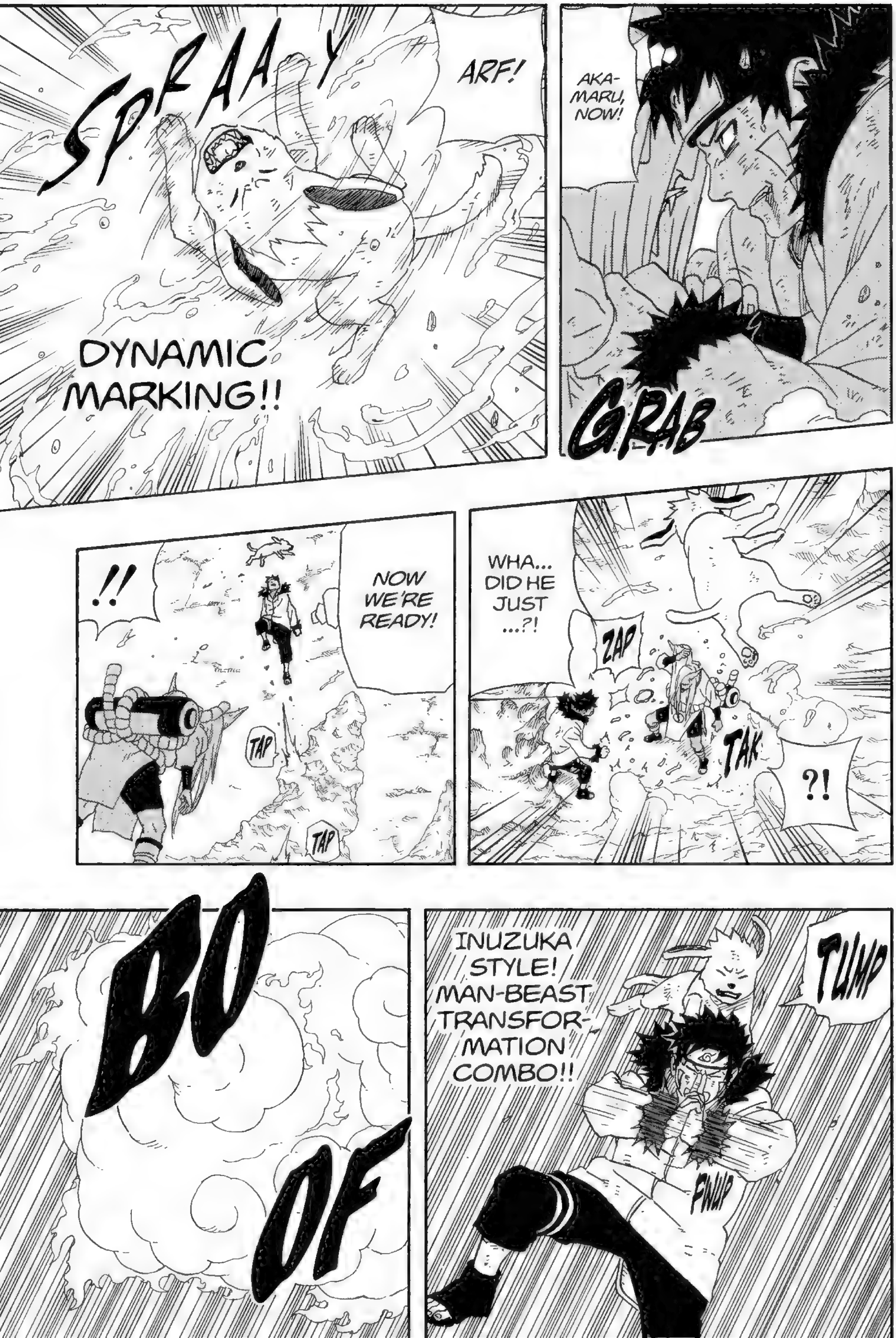

GAROGA! WOLF FANG-OVER-FANG!
SKF
ARF!!
FFMM

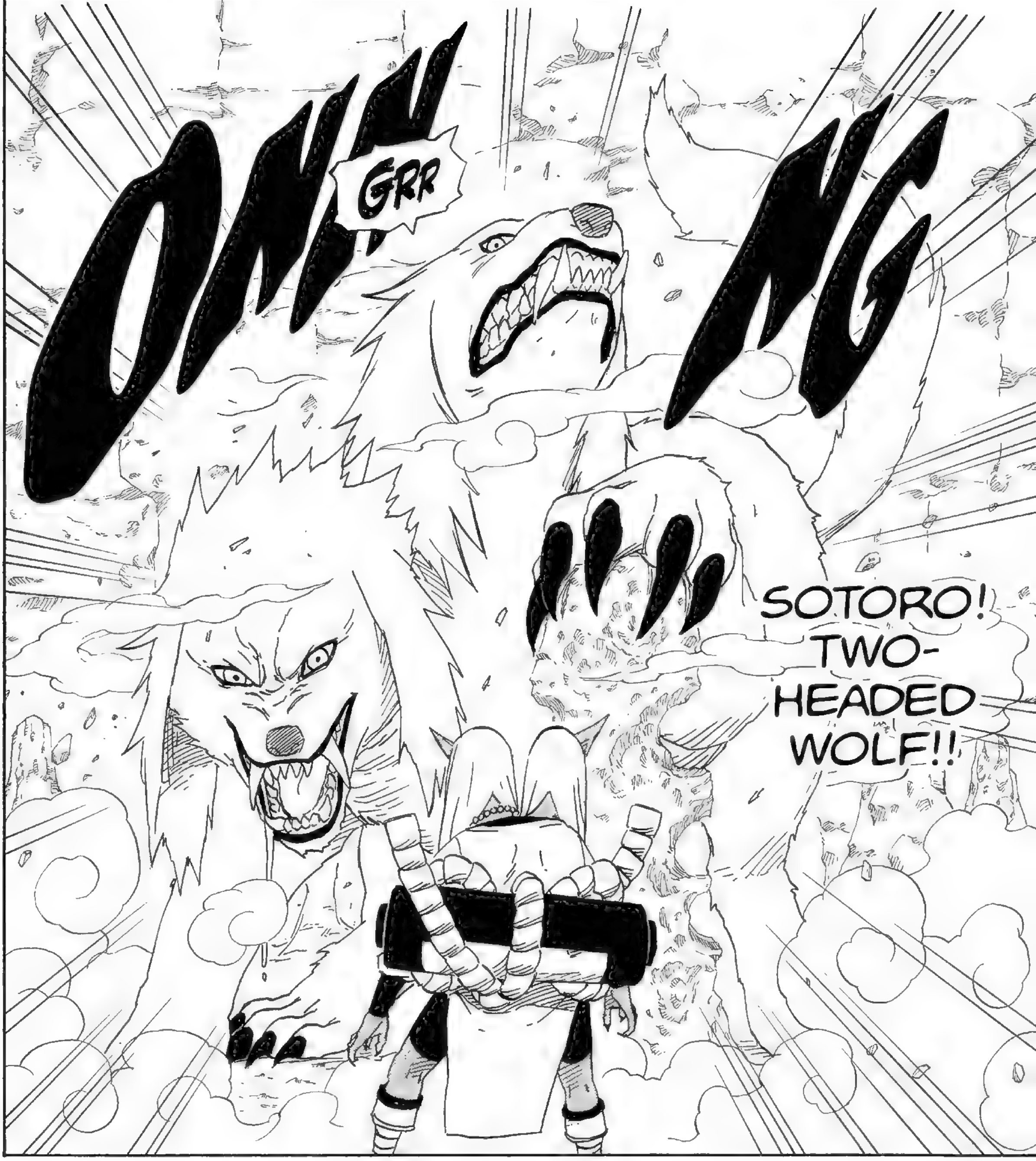
READ THIS WAY

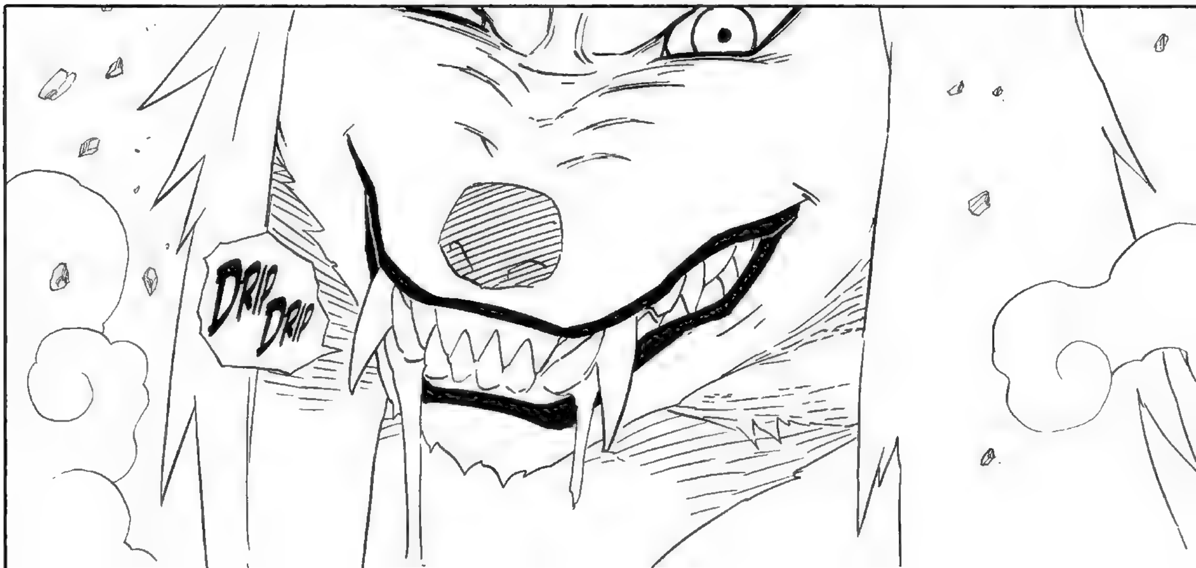

SMASH
UGH!
TWITCH
SHE CONTROLS THEM WITH HER FLUTE?!
!


BOOM
POW

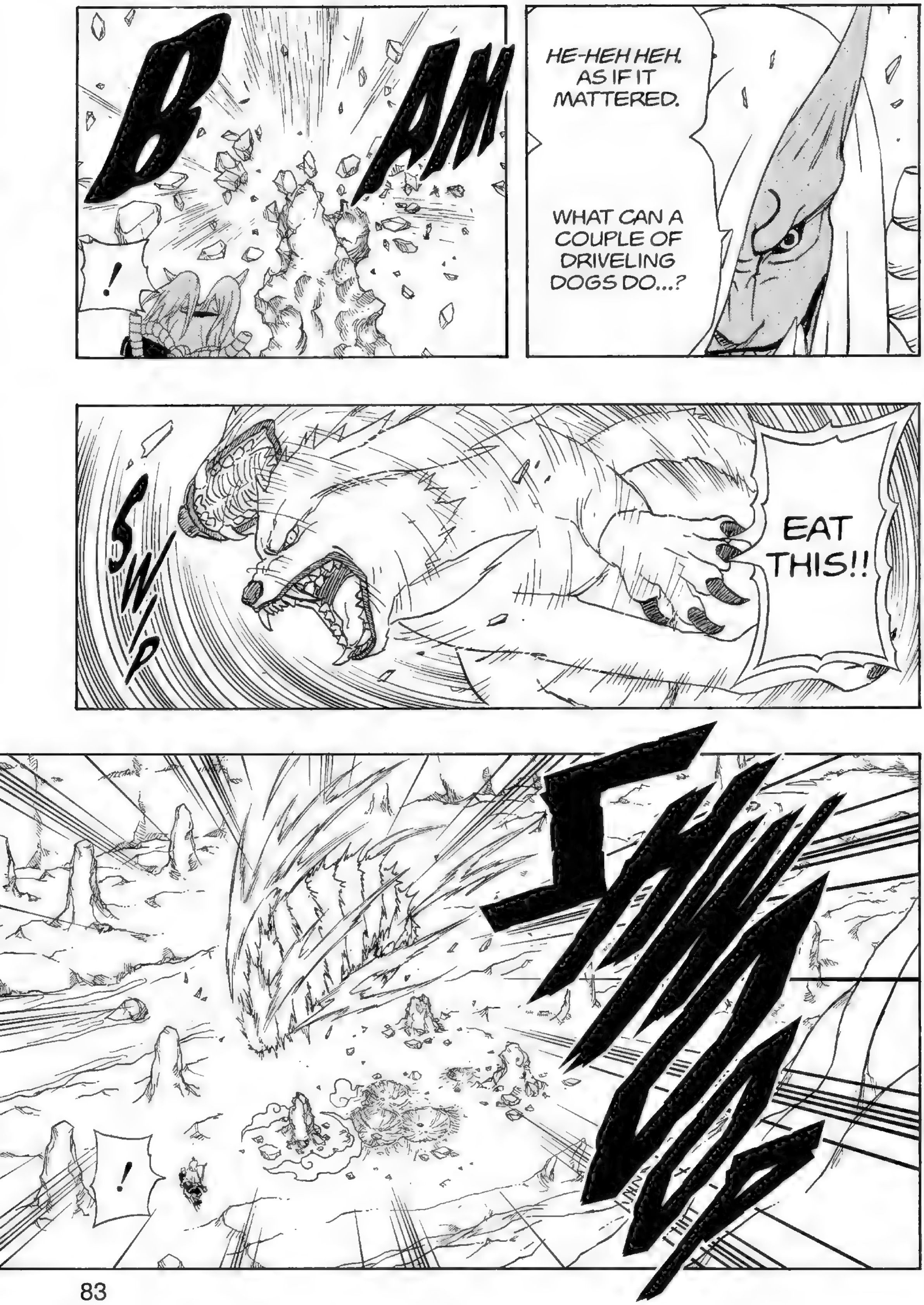
READ THIS WAY

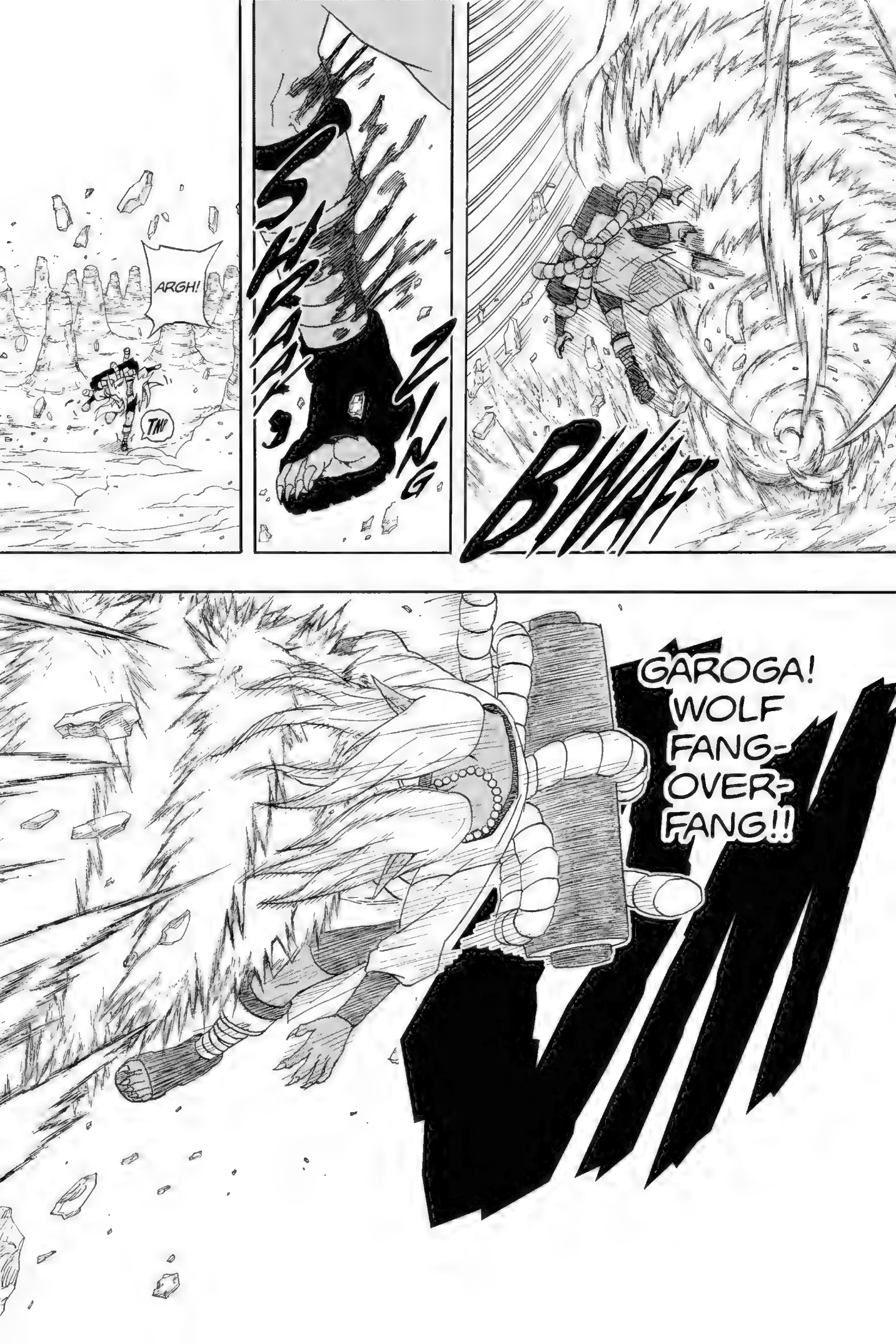

AKA-MARU, NOW!
GRAB
ARF!
SPRAAAY
DYNAMIC MARKING!!
WHA... DID HE JUST ...?!
ZAP
TAK
?!
NOW WE'RE READY!
!!
TAP
TAP
INUZUKA STYLE! MAN-BEAST TRANSFORMATION COMBO!!
TUMP
FWUP
BOOF

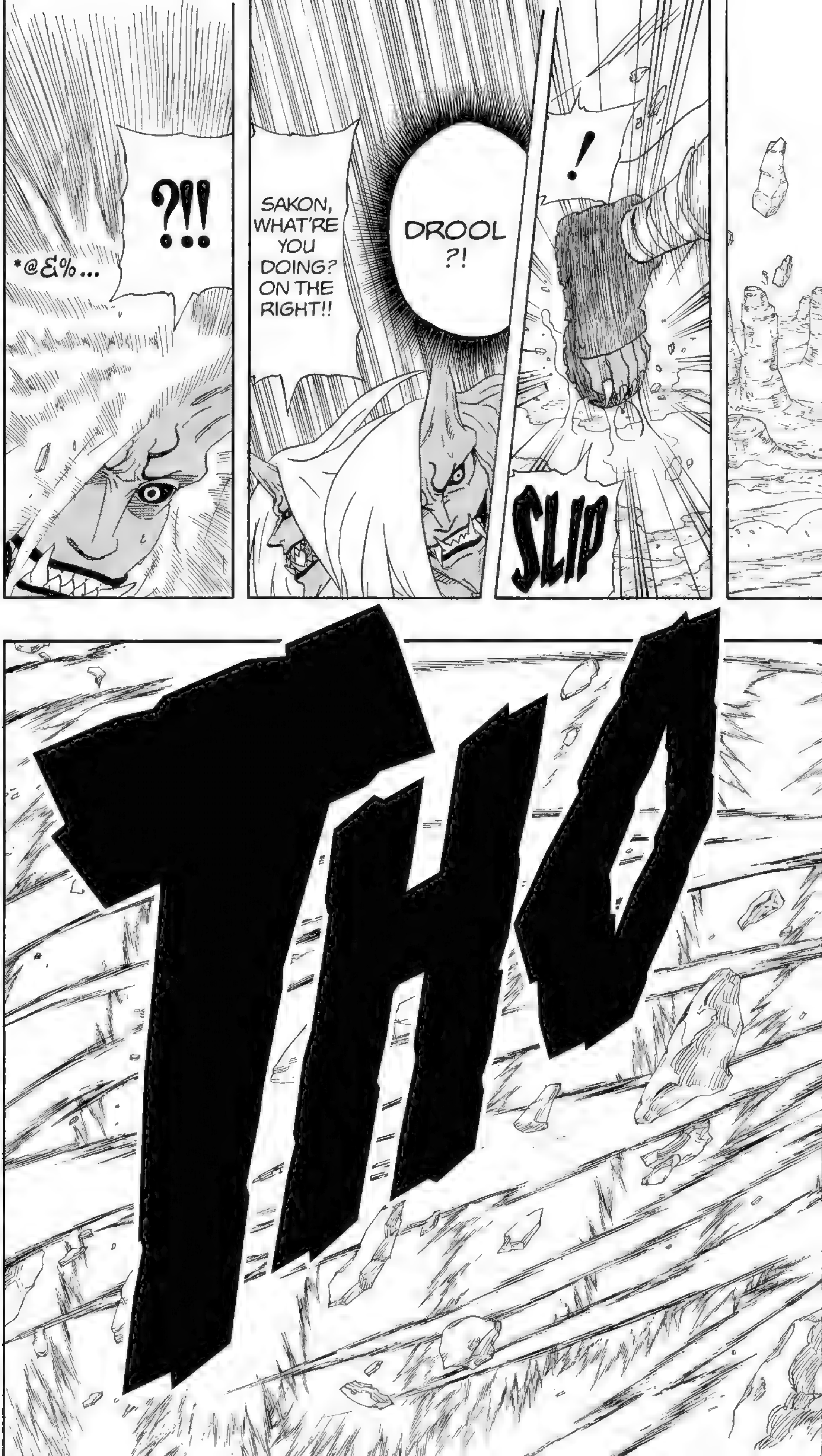

OMMNG
GRR
SOTORO! TWO-HEADED WOLF!!


DRIP DRIP

READ THIS WAY

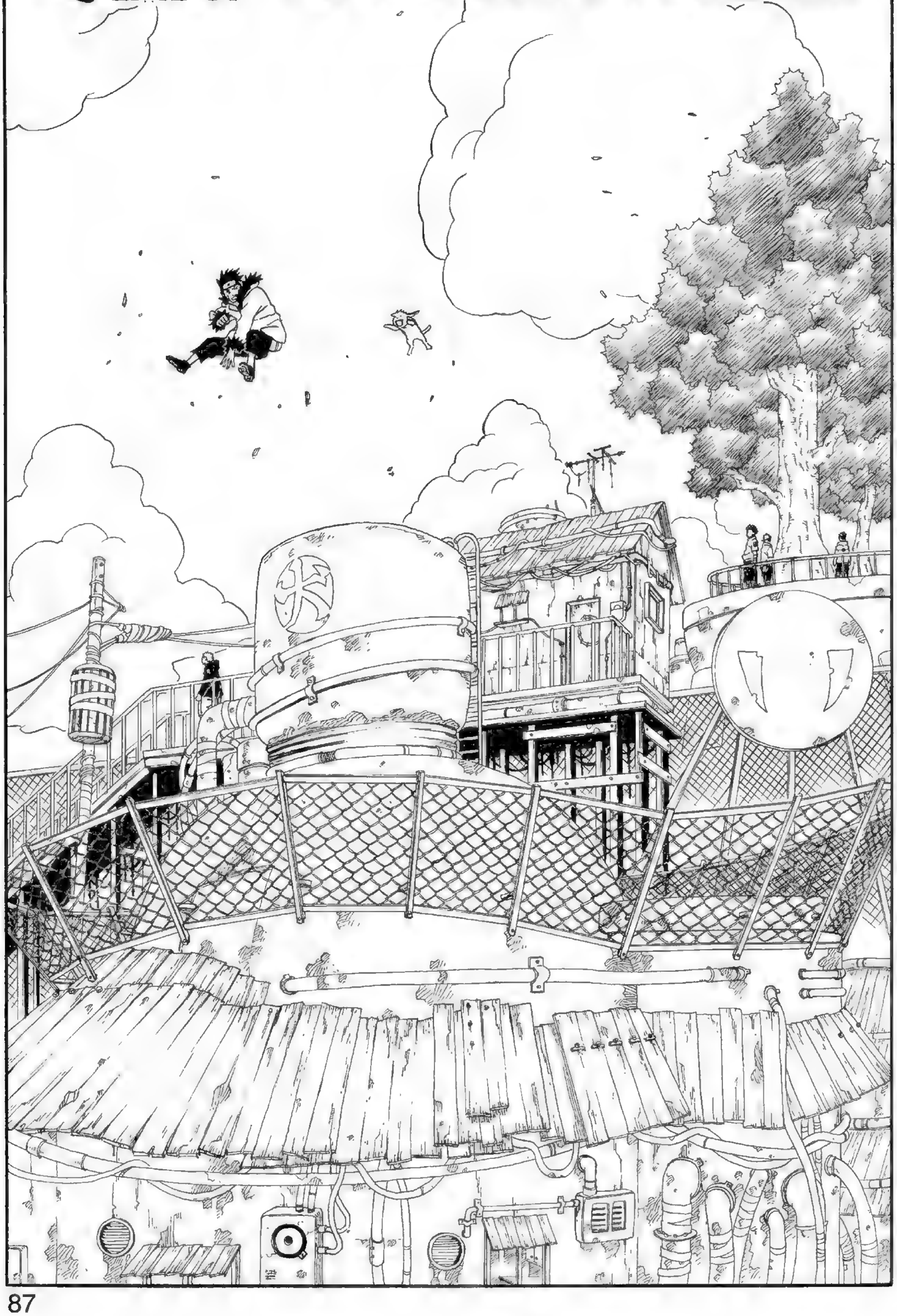

HE-HEH HEH. AS IF IT MATTERED.
WHAT CAN A COUPLE OF DRIVELING DOGS DO...?
BAM
!
SWIP
EAT THIS!!
SHOOM
!


BWAFF
SHWAAA
ZING
ARGH!
TMP
GAROGA! WOLF FANG-OVER-FANG!!

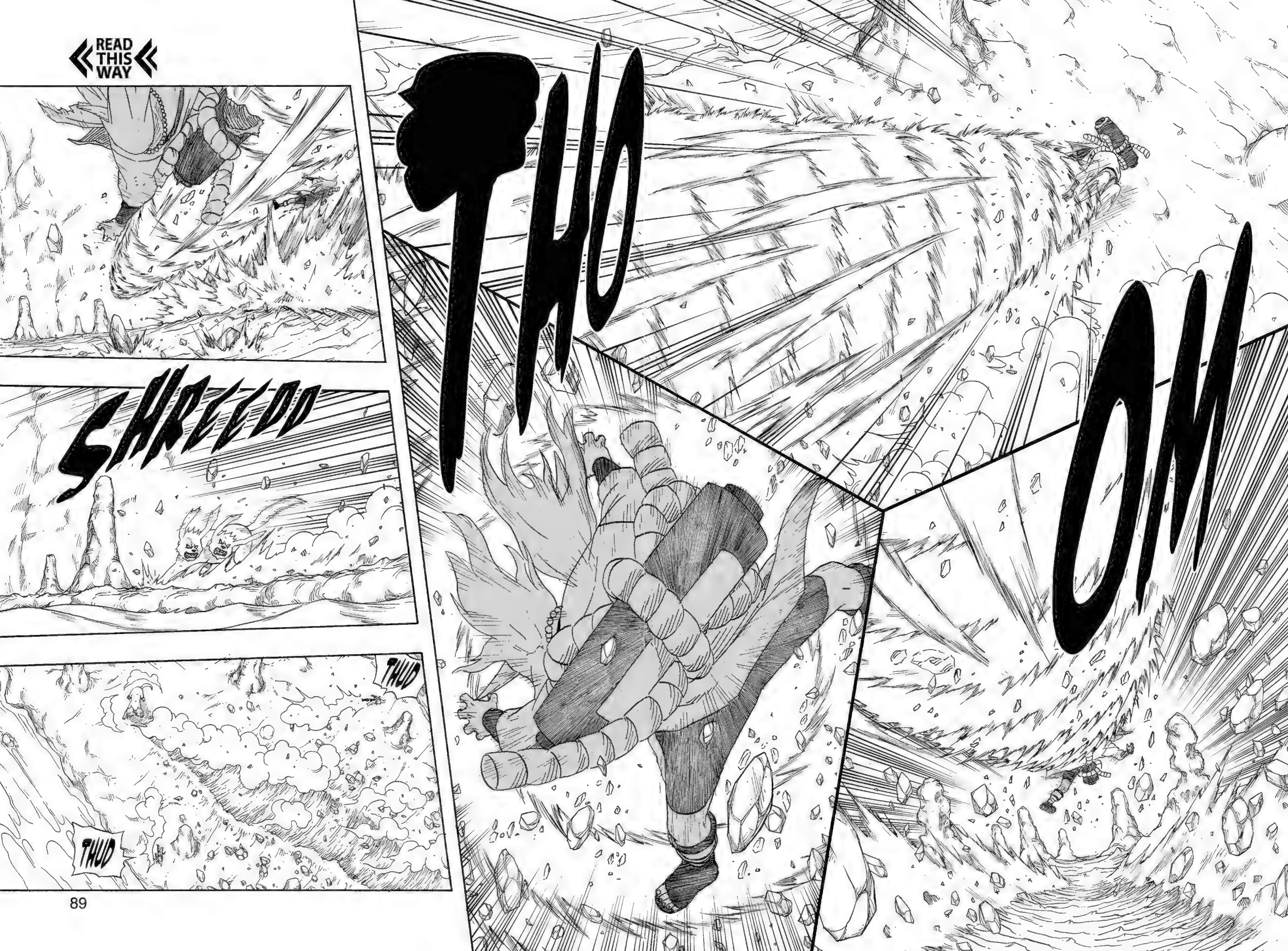

!
SLIP
DROOL ?!
SAKON, WHAT'RE YOU DOING? ON THE RIGHT!!
?!!
*@Ɛ%...
THO

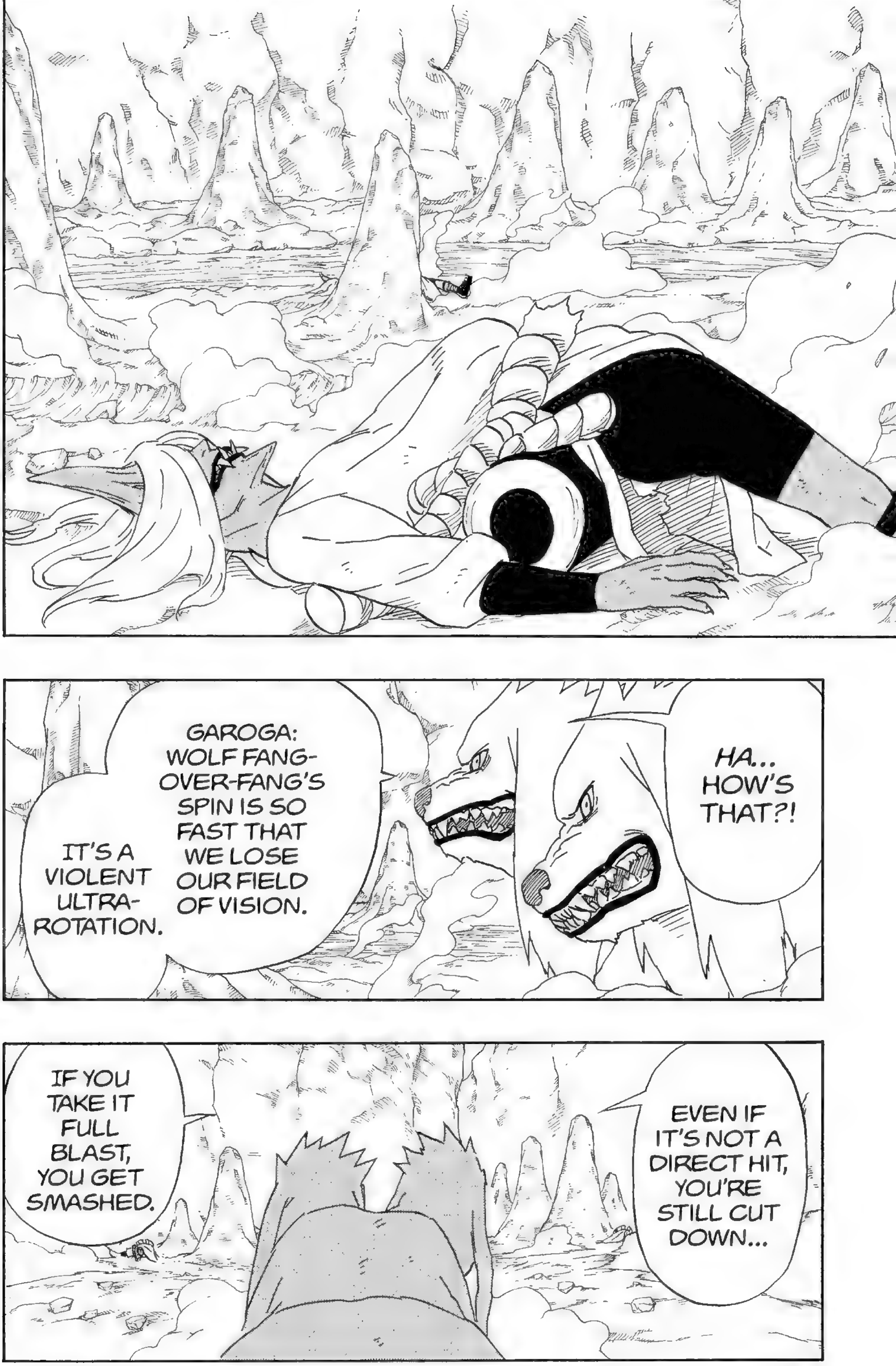
NARUTO™

Number 204: Ukon's Prowess

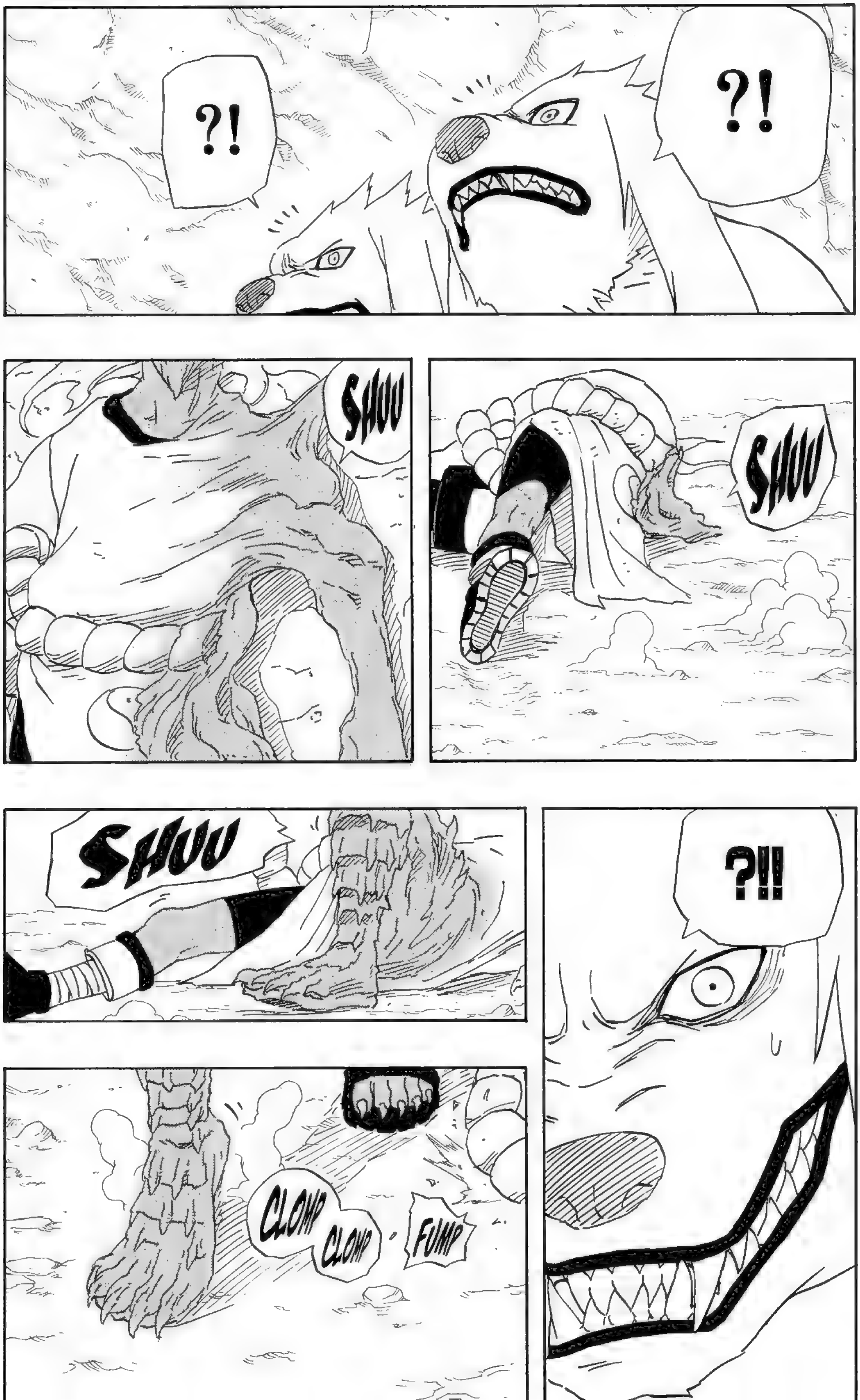


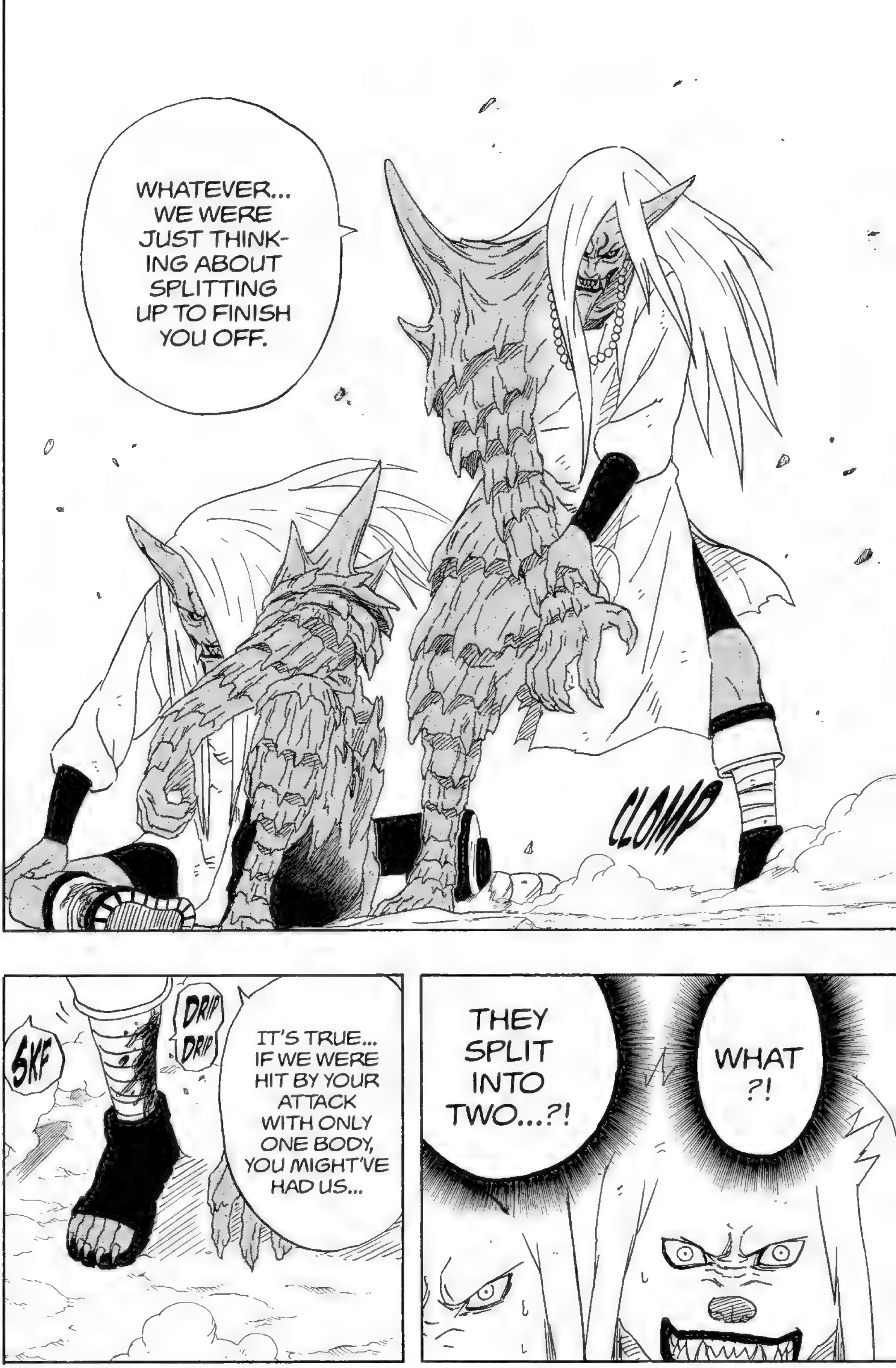
READ THIS WAY

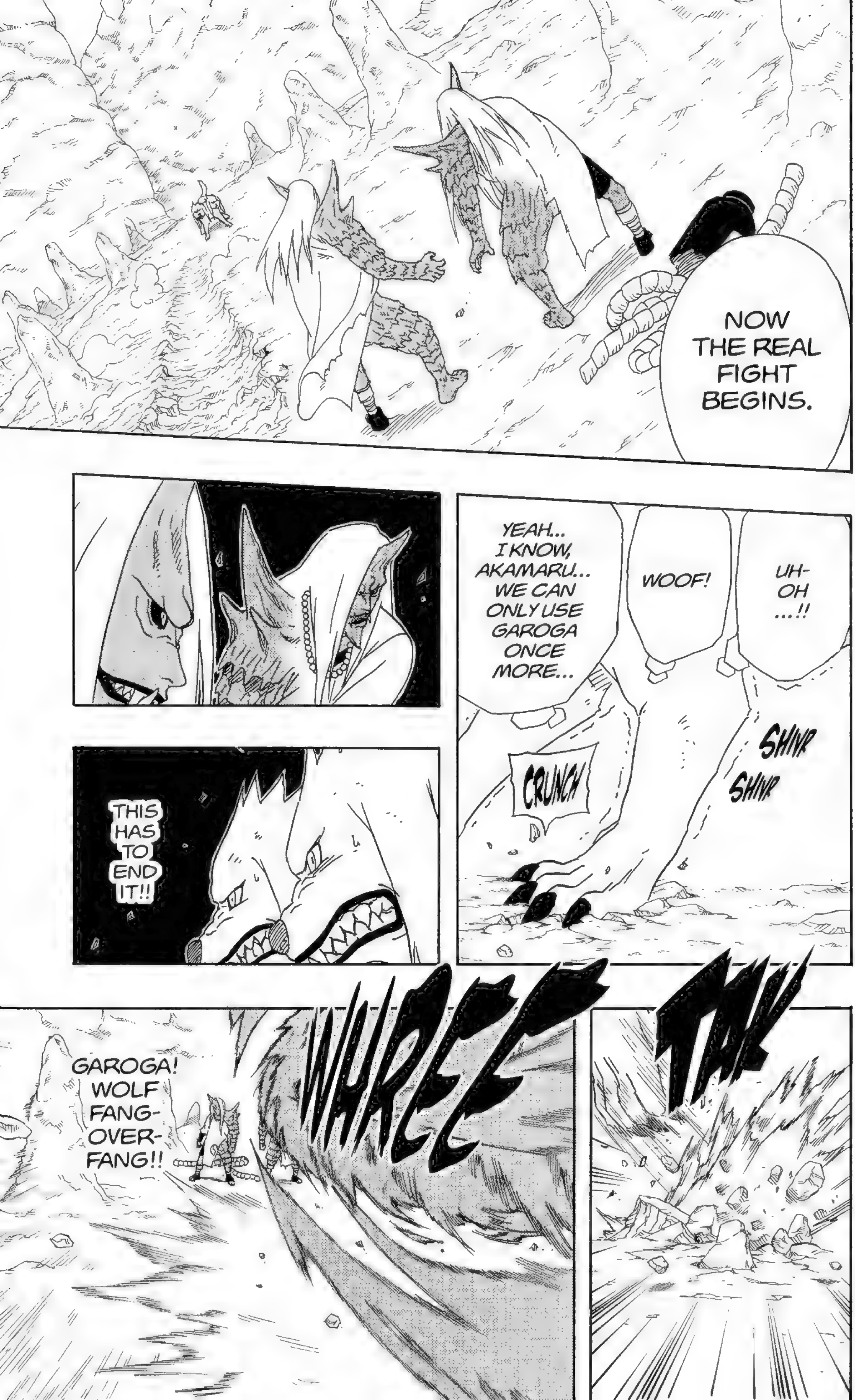

THOOM
SHREEDD
THUD
THUD

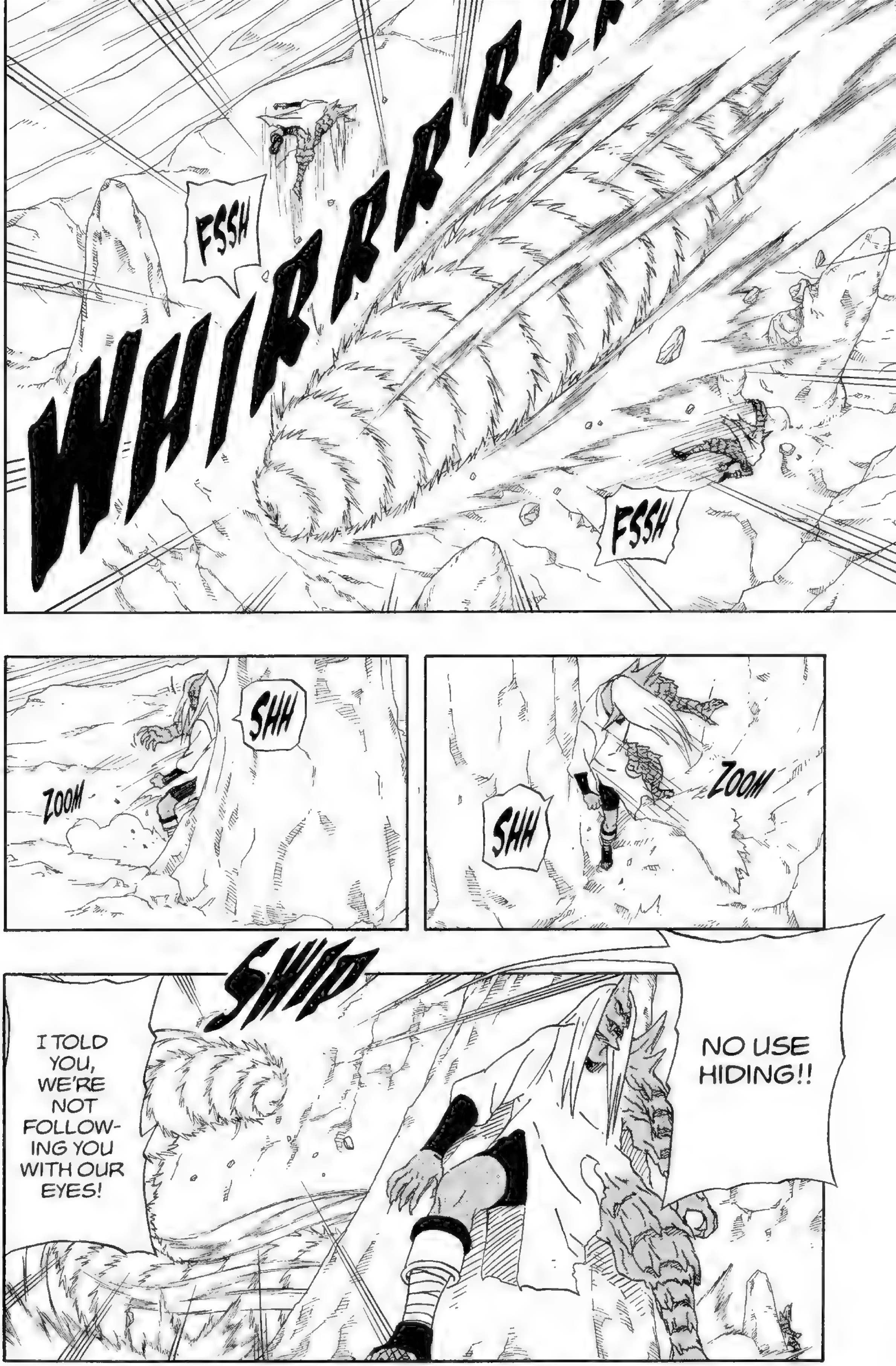

HA... HOW'S THAT?!
GAROGA: WOLF FANG-OVER-FANG'S SPIN IS SO FAST THAT WE LOSE OUR FIELD OF VISION.
IT'S A VIOLENT ULTRA-ROTATION.
EVEN IF IT'S NOT A DIRECT HIT, YOU'RE STILL CUT DOWN...
IF YOU TAKE IT FULL BLAST, YOU GET SMASHED.

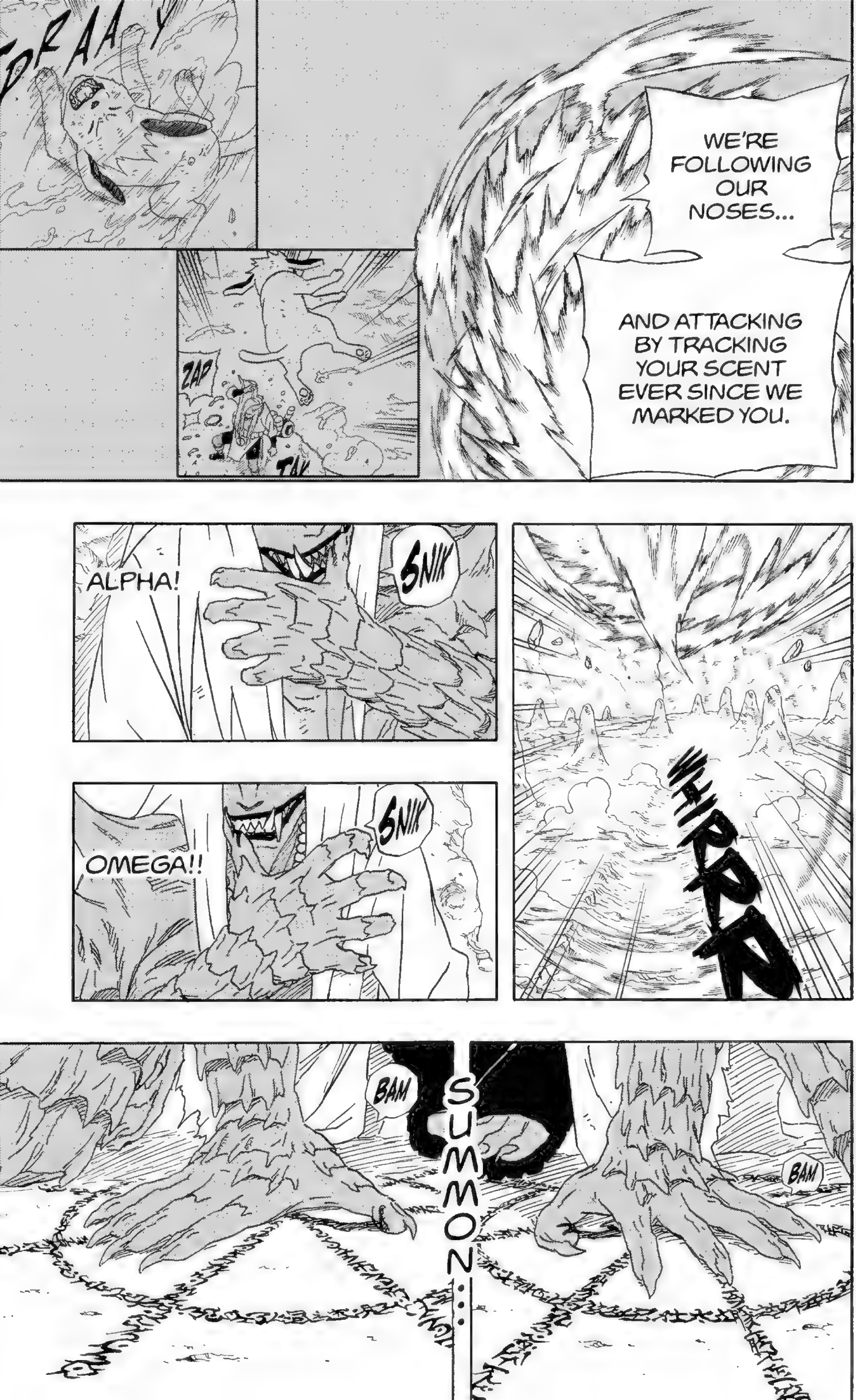
READ THIS WAY

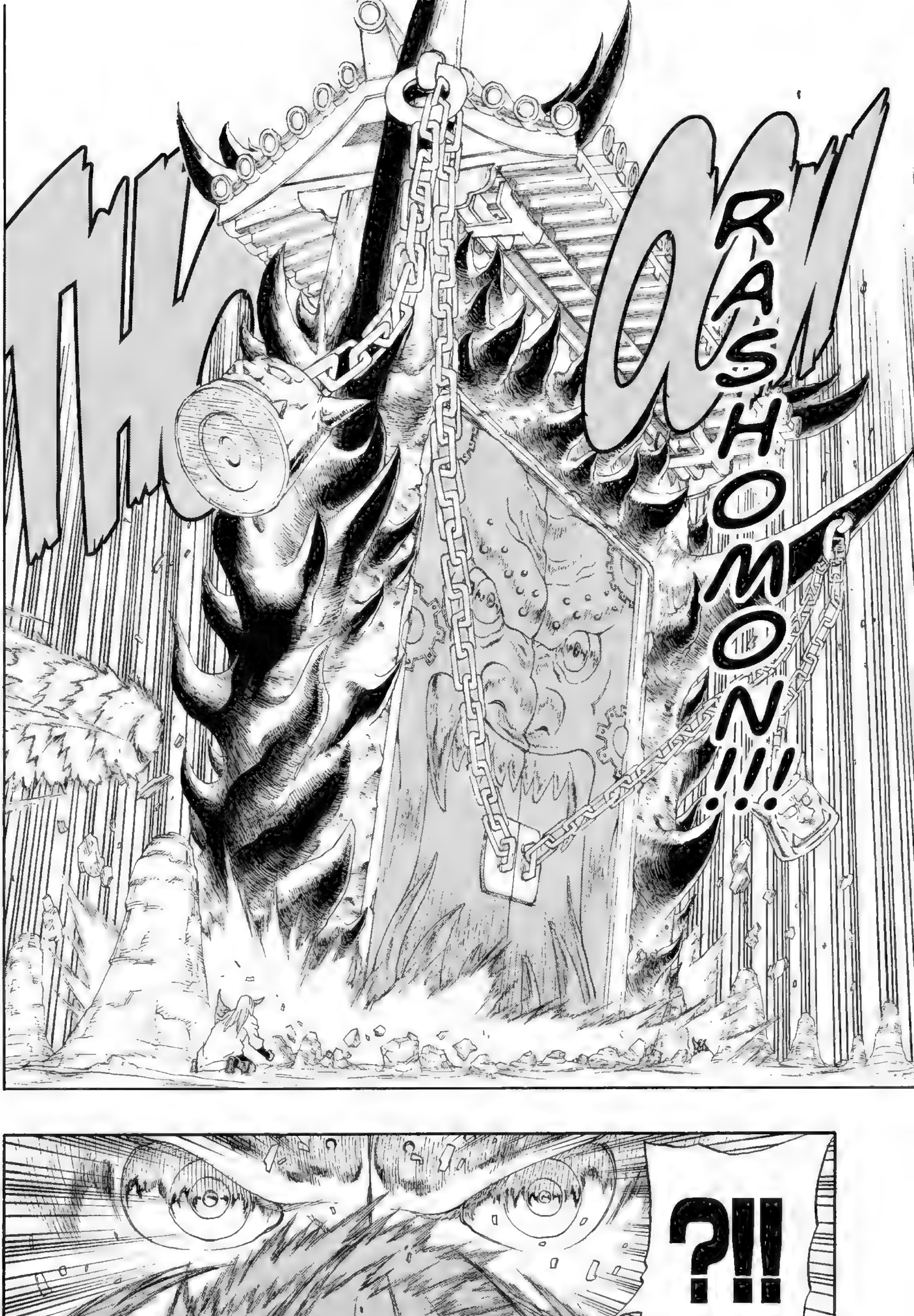

?!
?!
SHUU
SHUU
?!!
SHUU
CLOMP
CLOMP
FUMP

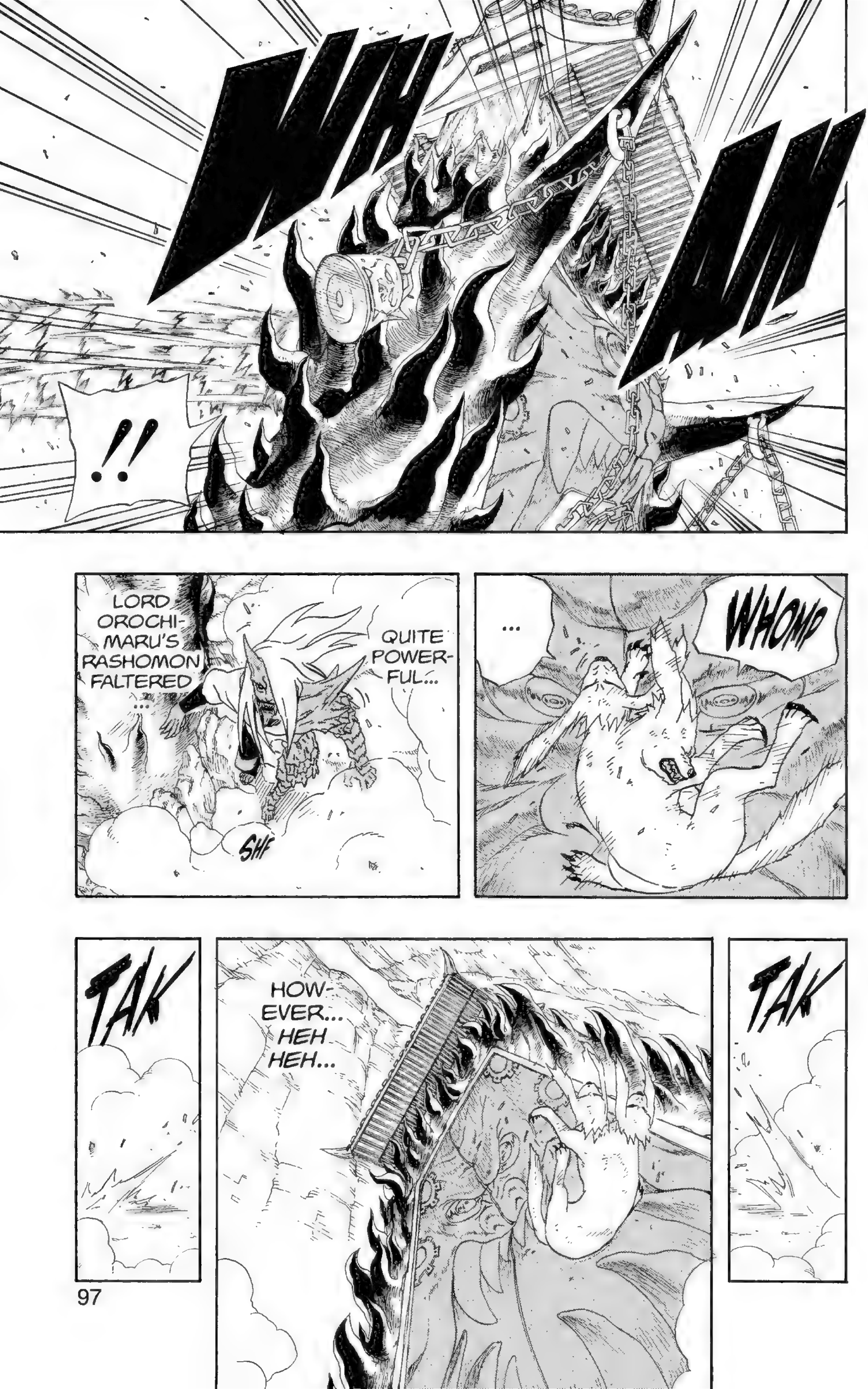

WHATEVER... WE WERE JUST THINKING ABOUT SPLITTING UP TO FINISH YOU OFF.
CLOMP
WHAT?!
THEY SPLIT INTO TWO...?!
IT'S TRUE... IF WE WERE HIT BY YOUR ATTACK WITH ONLY ONE BODY, YOU MIGHT'VE HAD US...
DRIP DRIP
SKF

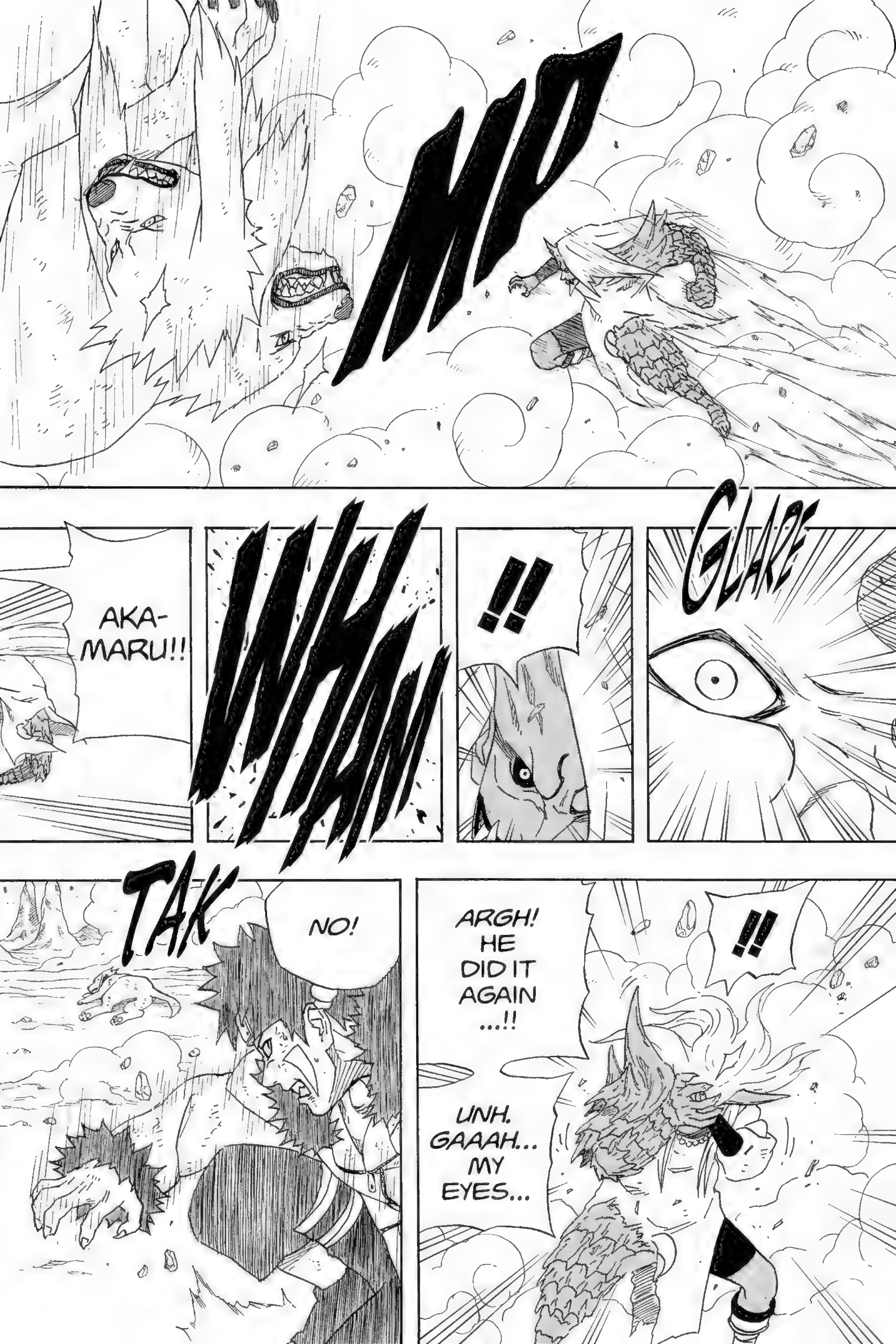

NOW THE REAL FIGHT BEGINS.
YEAH... I KNOW, AKAMARU... WE CAN ONLY USE GAROGA ONCE MORE...
WOOF!
UH-OH ...!!
CRUNCH
SHIVR SHIVR
THIS HAS TO END IT!!
GAROGA! WOLF FANG-OVER-FANG!!
WHREE
TAK

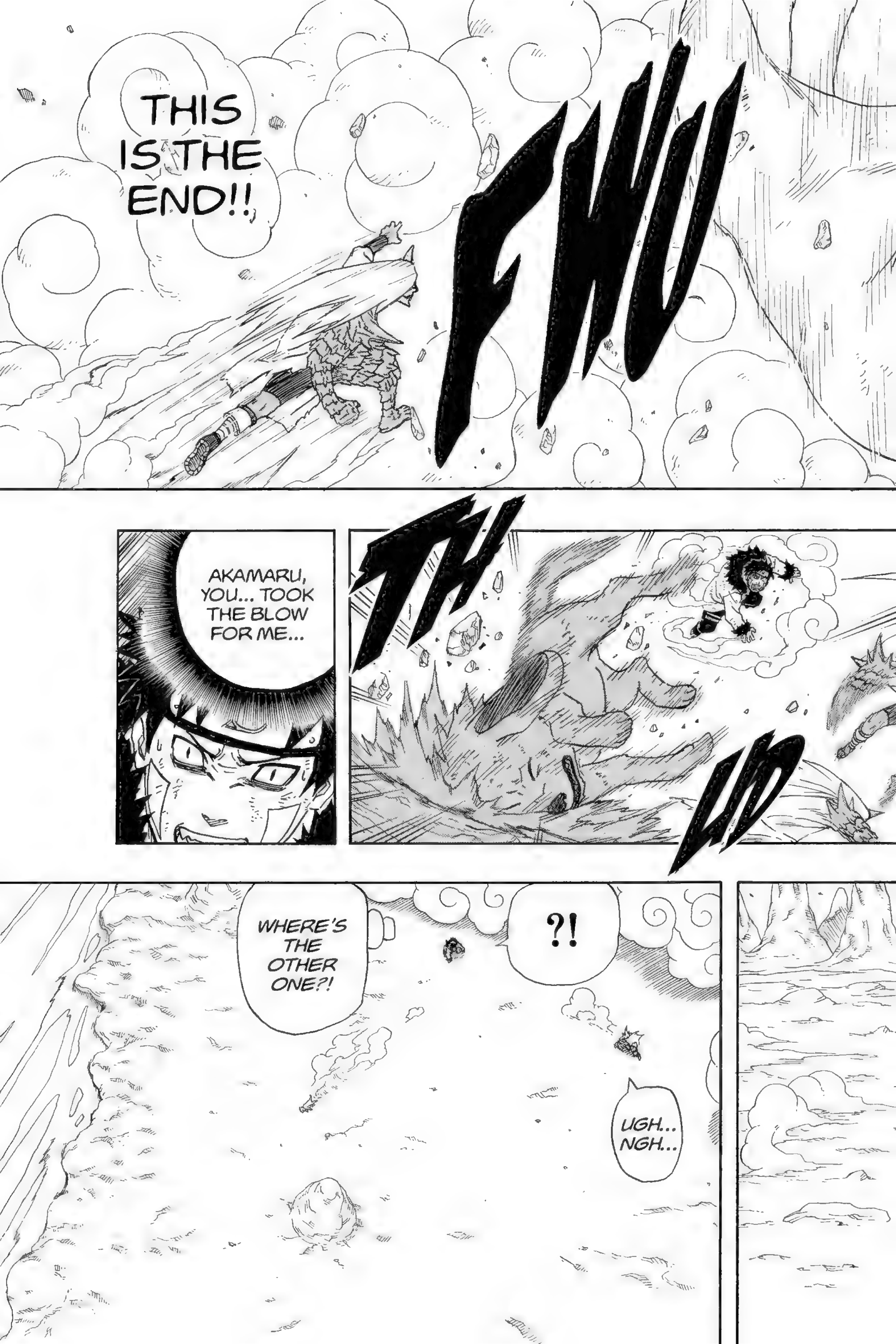

WHIRRRRRR
FSSH
FSSH
SHH
ZOOM
ZOOM
SHH
SHIP
I TOLD YOU, WE'RE NOT FOLLOWING YOU WITH OUR EYES!
NO USE HIDING!!

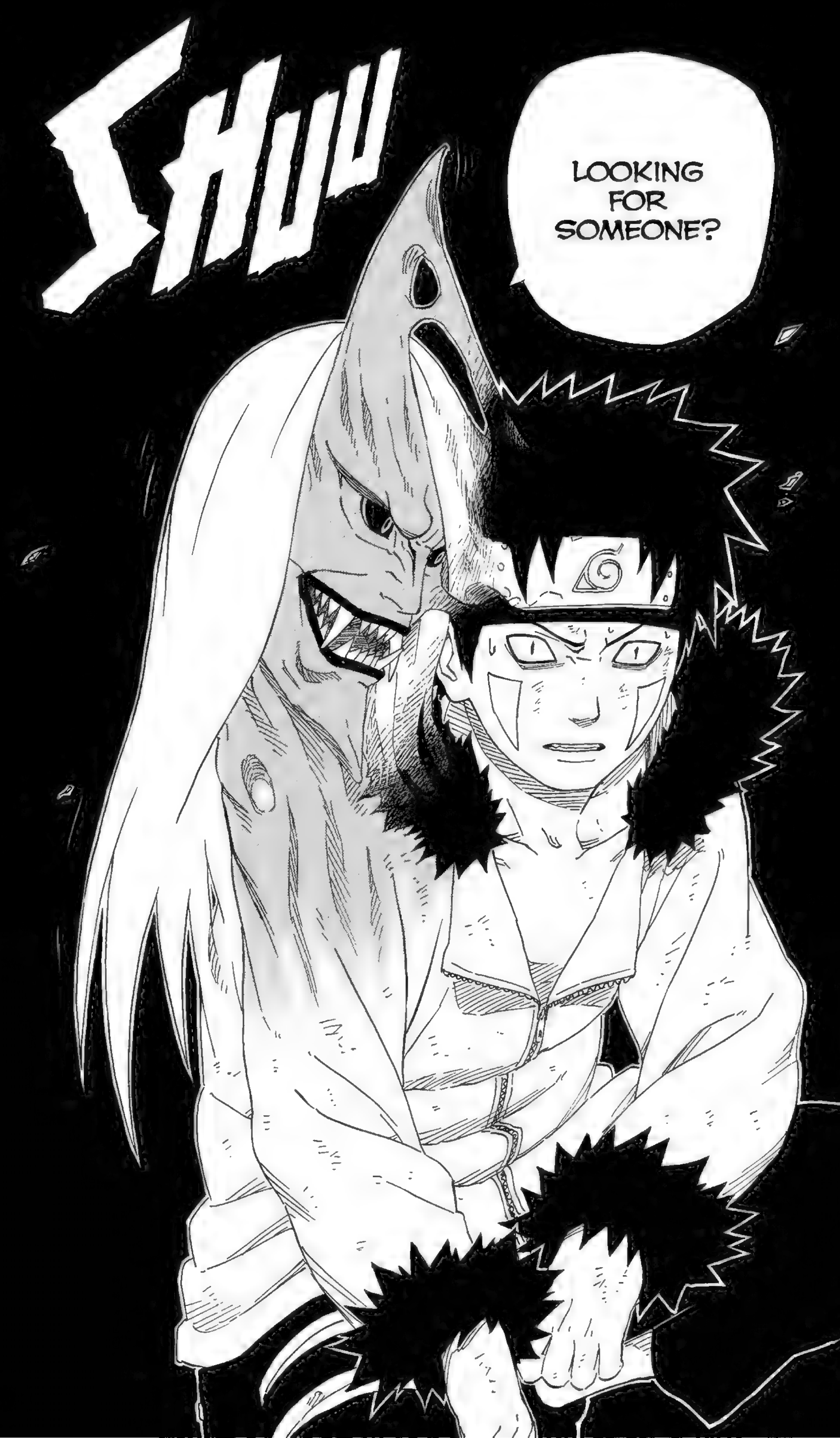

WE'RE FOLLOWING OUR NOSES...
AND ATTACKING BY TRACKING YOUR SCENT EVER SINCE WE MARKED YOU.
DRAAY
ZAP
TAK
WHIRRR
SNIK
ALPHA!
SNIK
OMEGA!!
BAM
SUMMON...
BAM

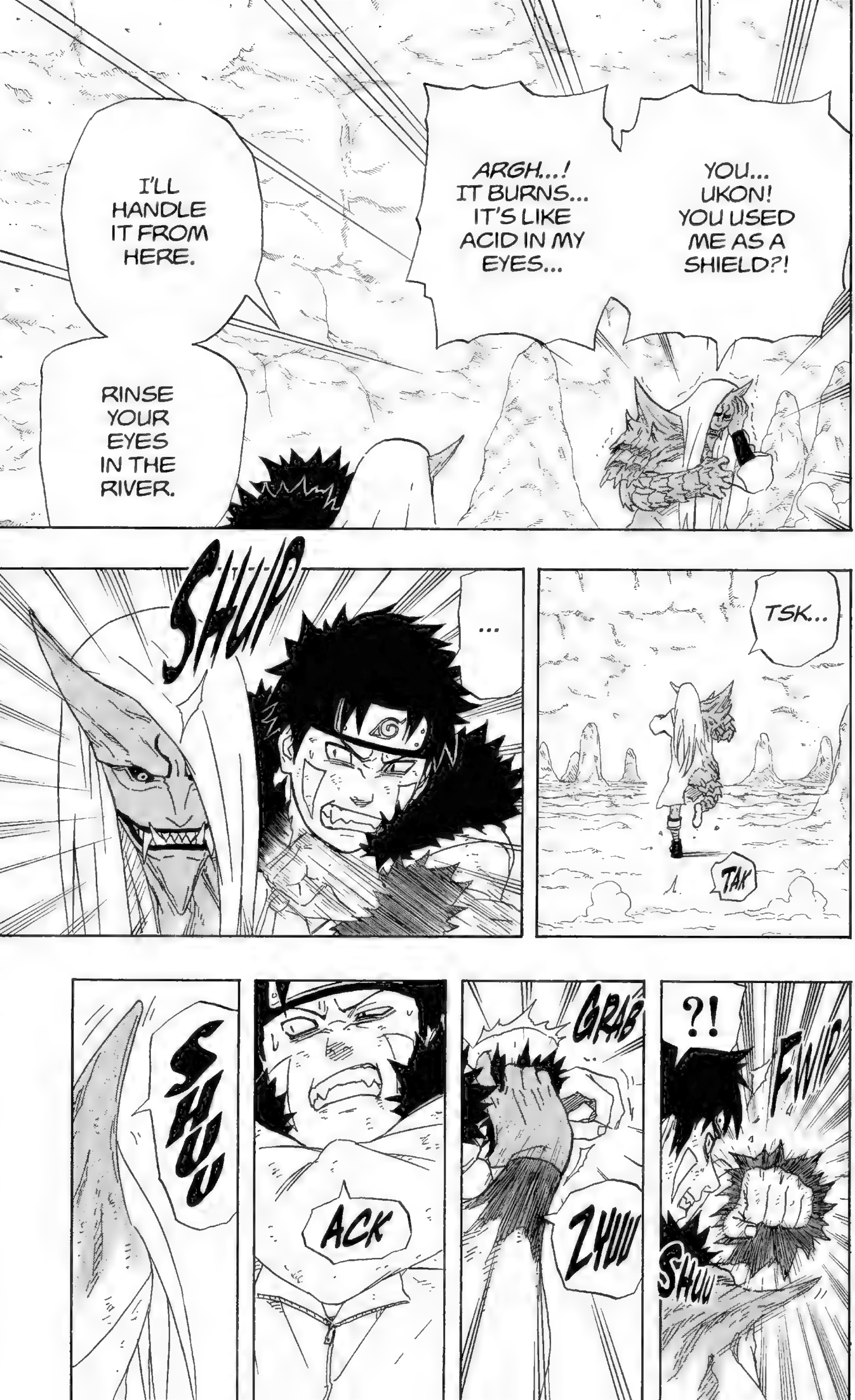

THOOM
RASHOMON!!!
?!!

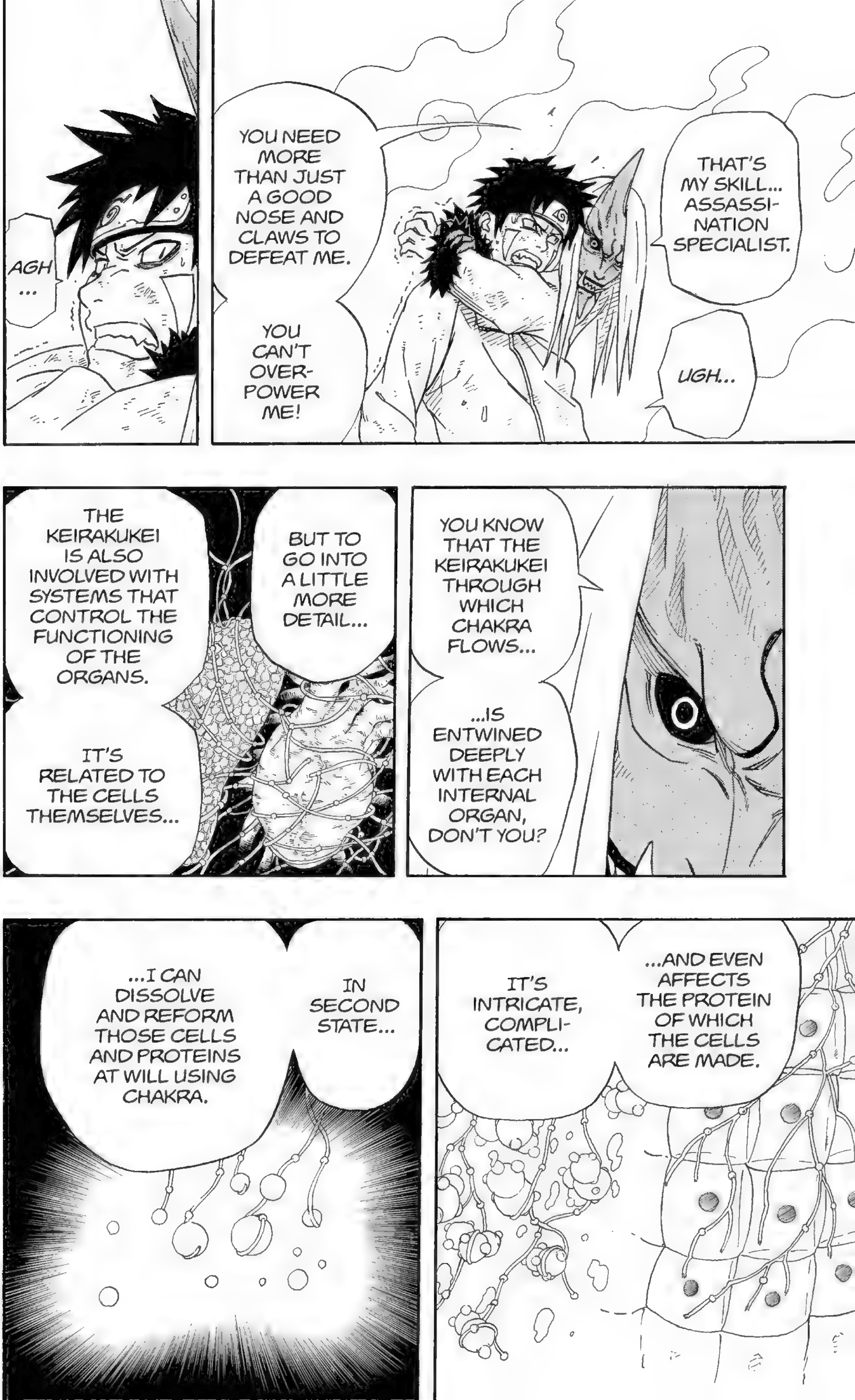

WHAAAM
!!
LORD OROCHIMARU'S RASHOMON FALTERED...
QUITE POWERFUL...
SHF
...
WHOMP
TAK
HOWEVER... HEH HEH...
TAK

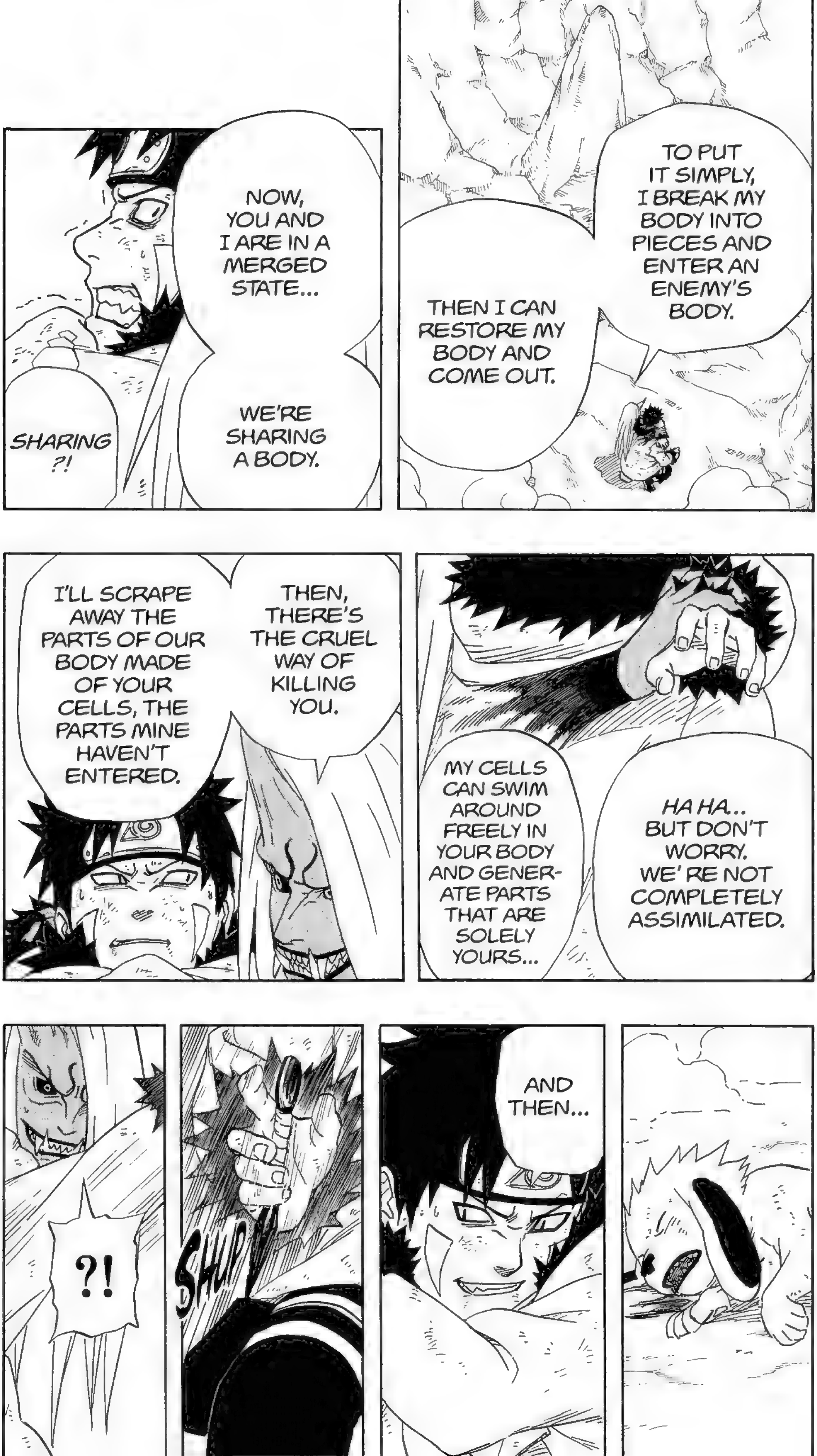

GLARE
!!
WHAM
AKA-MARU!!
!!
ARGH! HE DID IT AGAIN ...!!
UNH. GAAAH... MY EYES...
NO!
TAK

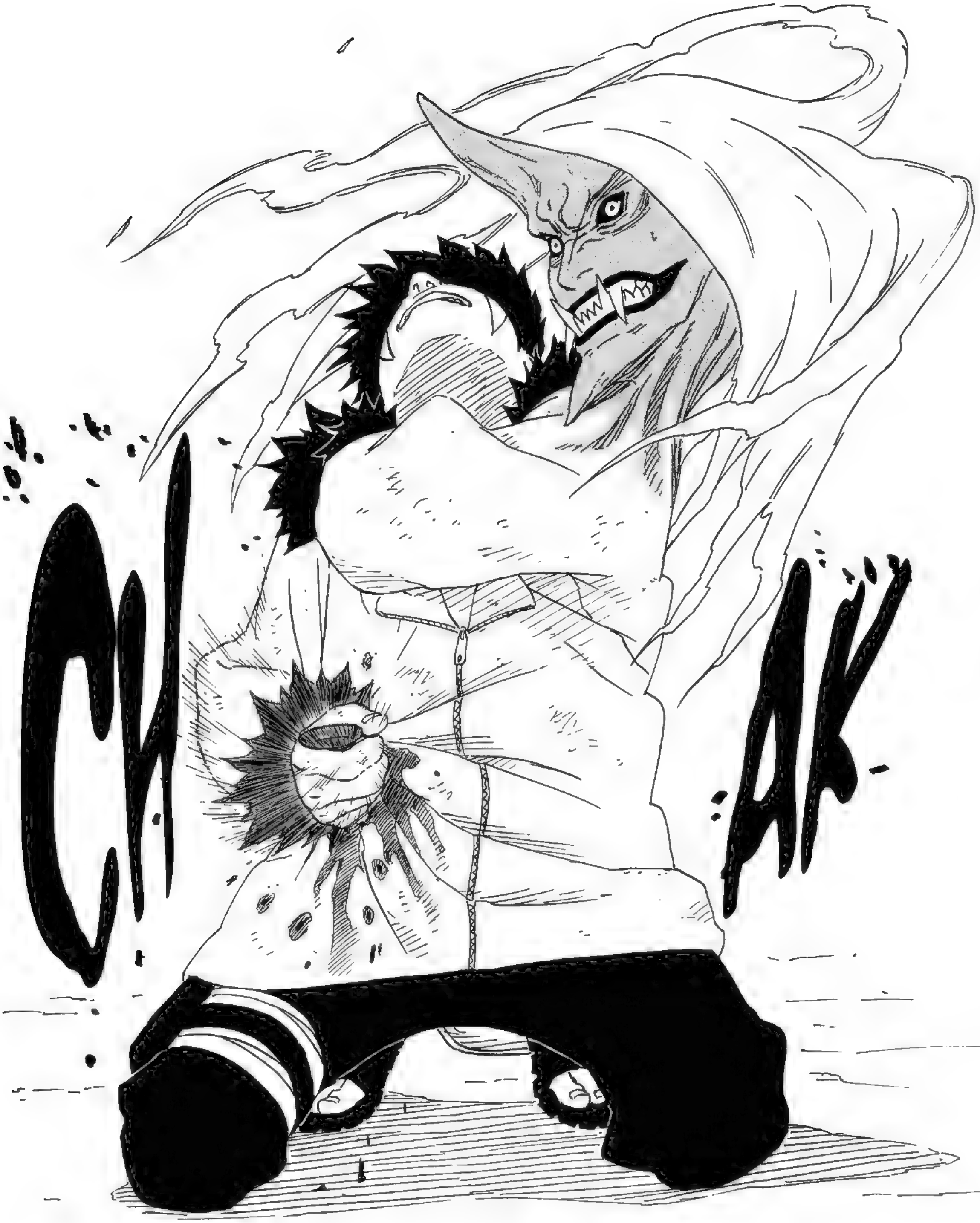

THIS IS THE END!!
FWU
TH
UD
AKAMARU, YOU... TOOK THE BLOW FOR ME...
?!
WHERE'S THE OTHER ONE?!
UGH... NGH...

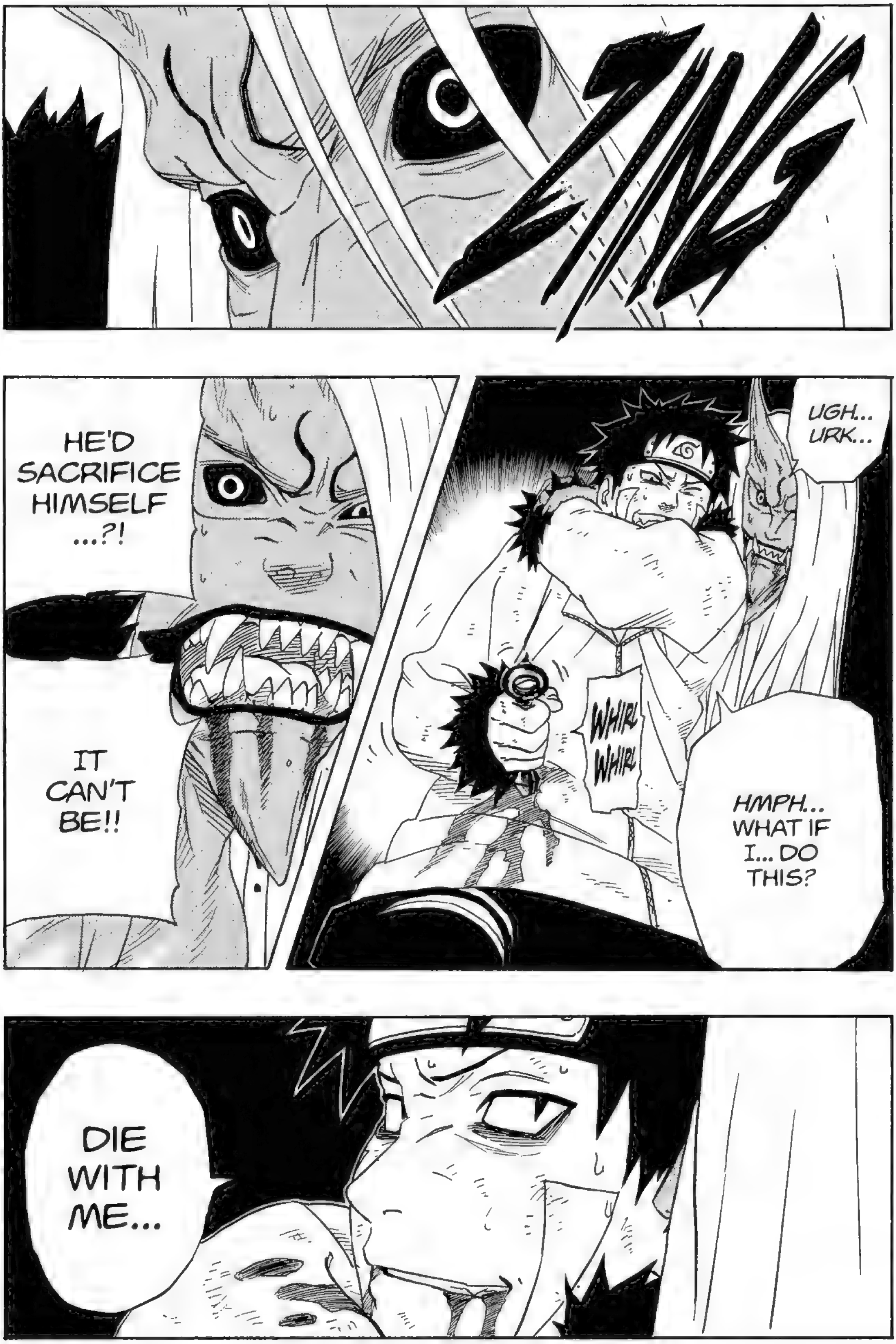

SHUU
LOOKING FOR SOMEONE?


YOU... UKON! YOU USED ME AS A SHIELD?!
ARGH...! IT BURNS... IT'S LIKE ACID IN MY EYES...
I'LL HANDLE IT FROM HERE.
RINSE YOUR EYES IN THE RIVER.
TSK...
TAK
...
SHUP
?!
FWIP
SHUU
GRAB
ZHUU
ACK
SHUU


THAT'S MY SKILL... ASSASSINATION SPECIALIST.
UGH...
YOU NEED MORE THAN JUST A GOOD NOSE AND CLAWS TO DEFEAT ME.
YOU CAN'T OVERPOWER ME!
AGH...
YOU KNOW THAT THE KEIRAKUKEI THROUGH WHICH CHAKRA FLOWS...
...IS ENTWINED DEEPLY WITH EACH INTERNAL ORGAN, DON'T YOU?
BUT TO GO INTO A LITTLE MORE DETAIL...
THE KEIRAKUKEI IS ALSO INVOLVED WITH SYSTEMS THAT CONTROL THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ORGANS.
IT'S RELATED TO THE CELLS THEMSELVES...
...AND EVEN AFFECTS THE PROTEIN OF WHICH THE CELLS ARE MADE.
IT'S INTRICATE, COMPLICATED...
IN SECOND STATE...
...I CAN DISSOLVE AND REFORM THOSE CELLS AND PROTEINS AT WILL USING CHAKRA.

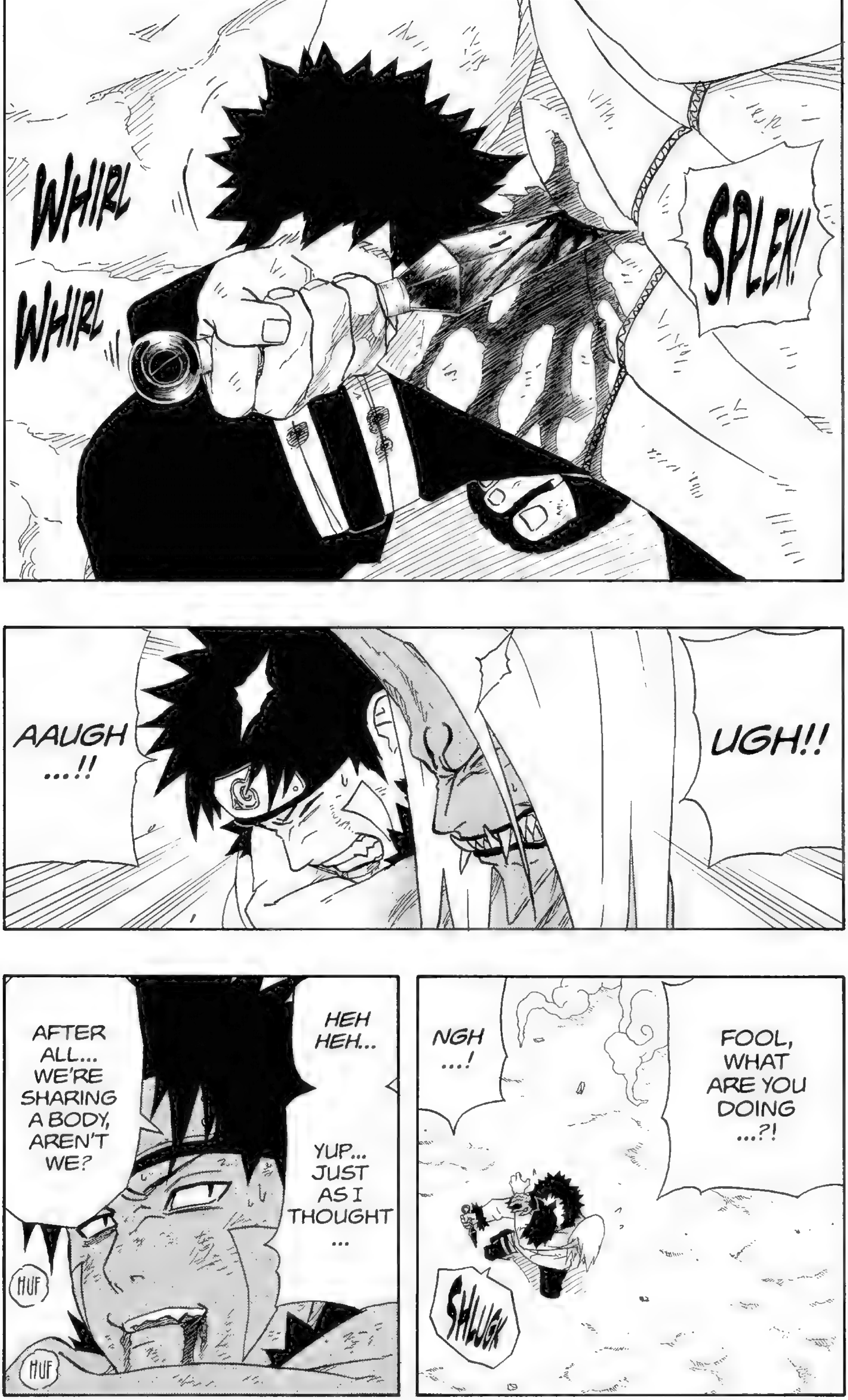

TO PUT IT SIMPLY, I BREAK MY BODY INTO PIECES AND ENTER AN ENEMY'S BODY.
THEN I CAN RESTORE MY BODY AND COME OUT.
NOW, YOU AND I ARE IN A MERGED STATE...
WE'RE SHARING A BODY.
SHARING ?!
HA HA... BUT DON'T WORRY. WE'RE NOT COMPLETELY ASSIMILATED.
MY CELLS CAN SWIM AROUND FREELY IN YOUR BODY AND GENERATE PARTS THAT ARE SOLELY YOURS...
THEN, THERE'S THE CRUEL WAY OF KILLING YOU.
I'LL SCRAPE AWAY THE PARTS OF OUR BODY MADE OF YOUR CELLS, THE PARTS MINE HAVEN'T ENTERED.
AND THEN...
SHUP
?!


CHAK

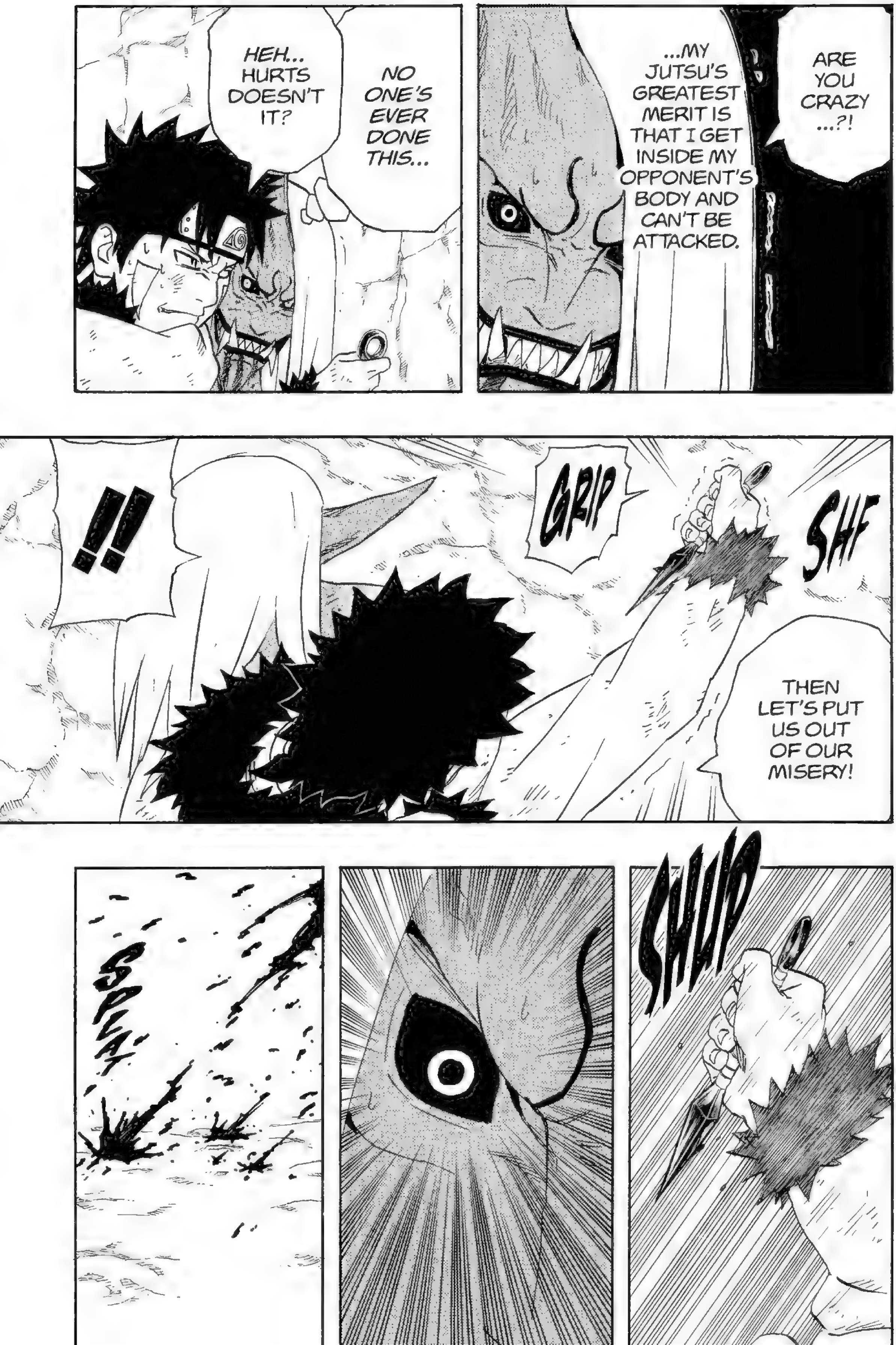

ZING
UGH... URK...
WHIRL WHIRL
HMPH... WHAT IF I... DO THIS?
HE'D SACRIFICE HIMSELF ...?!
IT CAN'T BE!!
DIE WITH ME...

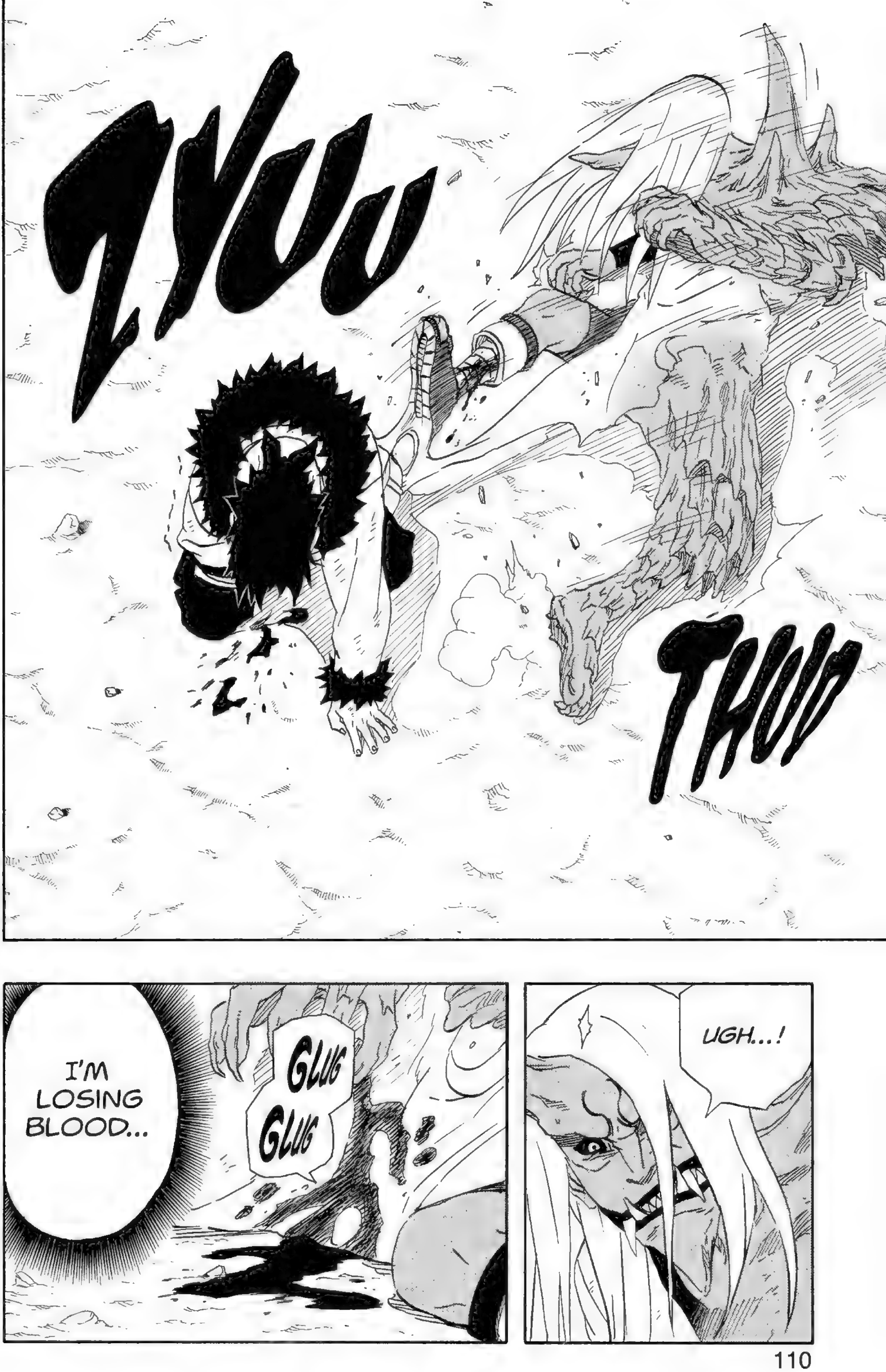
NARUTO™

Number 205: Kiba's Decision!!

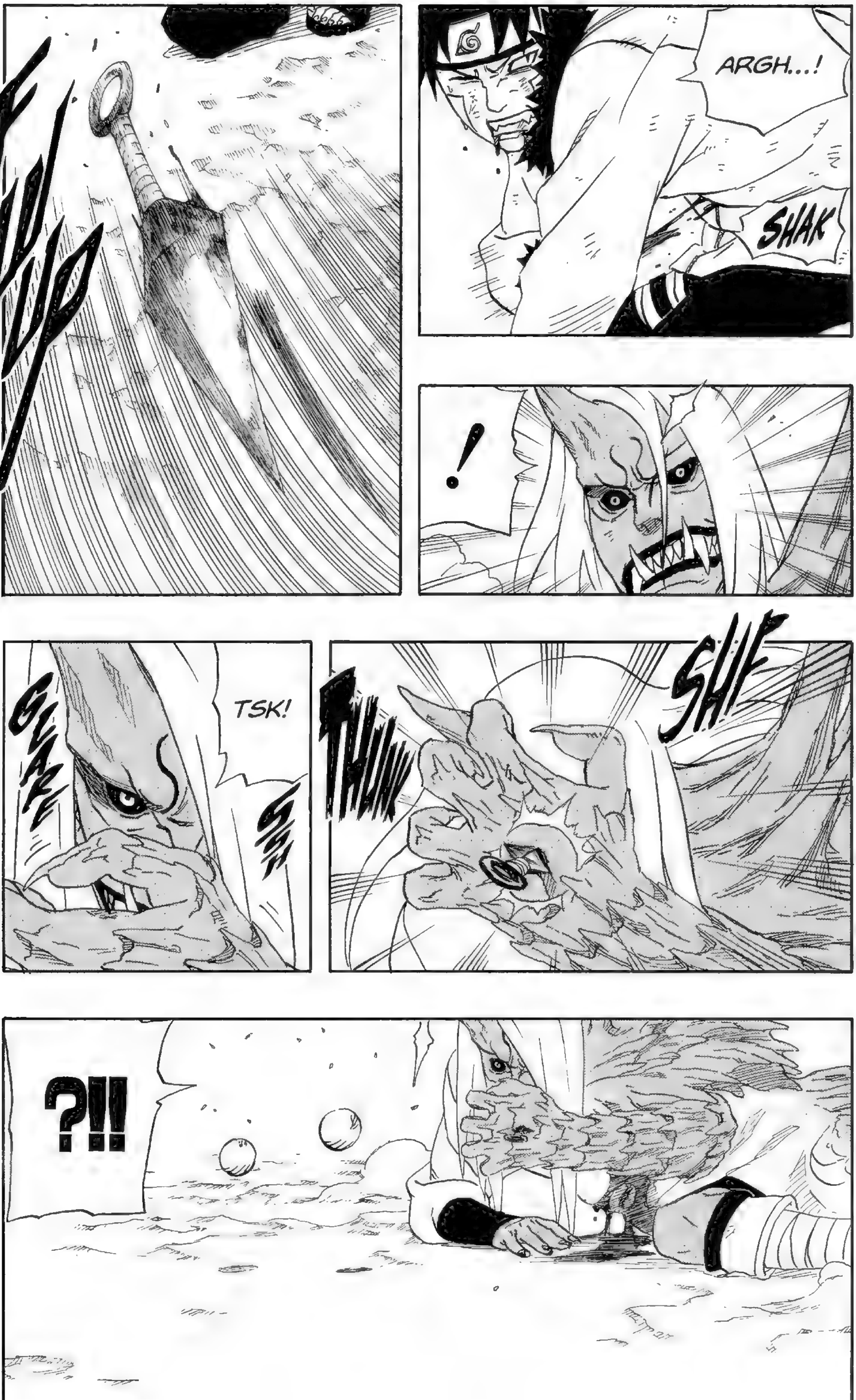

SPLEK!
WHIRL
WHIRL
UGH!!
AAUGH ...!!
FOOL, WHAT ARE YOU DOING ...?!
NGH ...!
SHLUGK
HEH HEH...
YUP... JUST AS I THOUGHT ...
AFTER ALL... WE'RE SHARING A BODY, AREN'T WE?
HUF
HUF

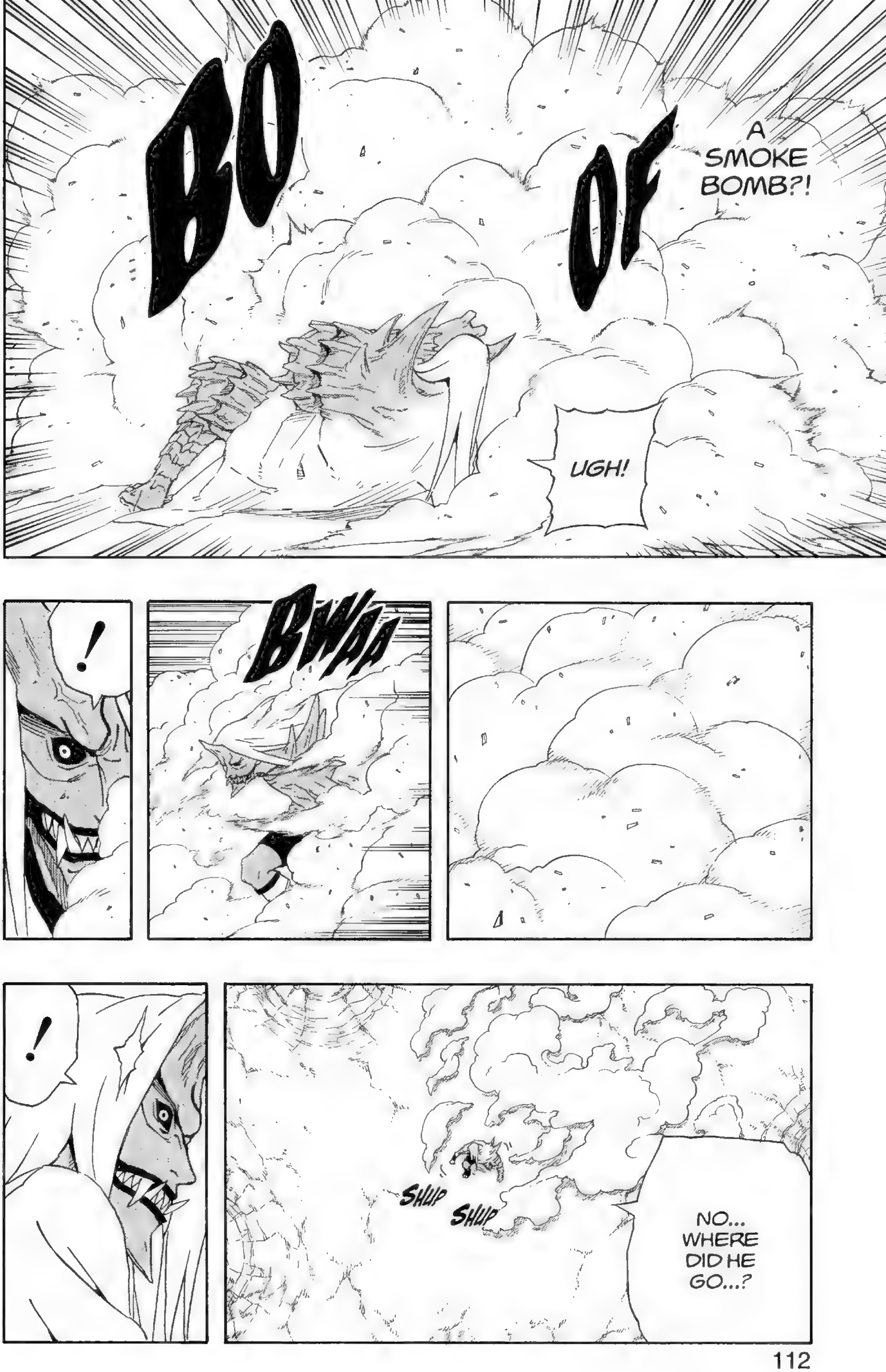
READ THIS WAY


ARE YOU CRAZY ...?!
...MY JUTSU'S GREATEST MERIT IS THAT I GET INSIDE MY OPPONENT'S BODY AND CAN'T BE ATTACKED.
NO ONE'S EVER DONE THIS...
HEH... HURTS DOESN'T IT?
SHF
GRIP
THEN LET'S PUT US OUT OF OUR MISERY!
!!
SHUP
SPLAT

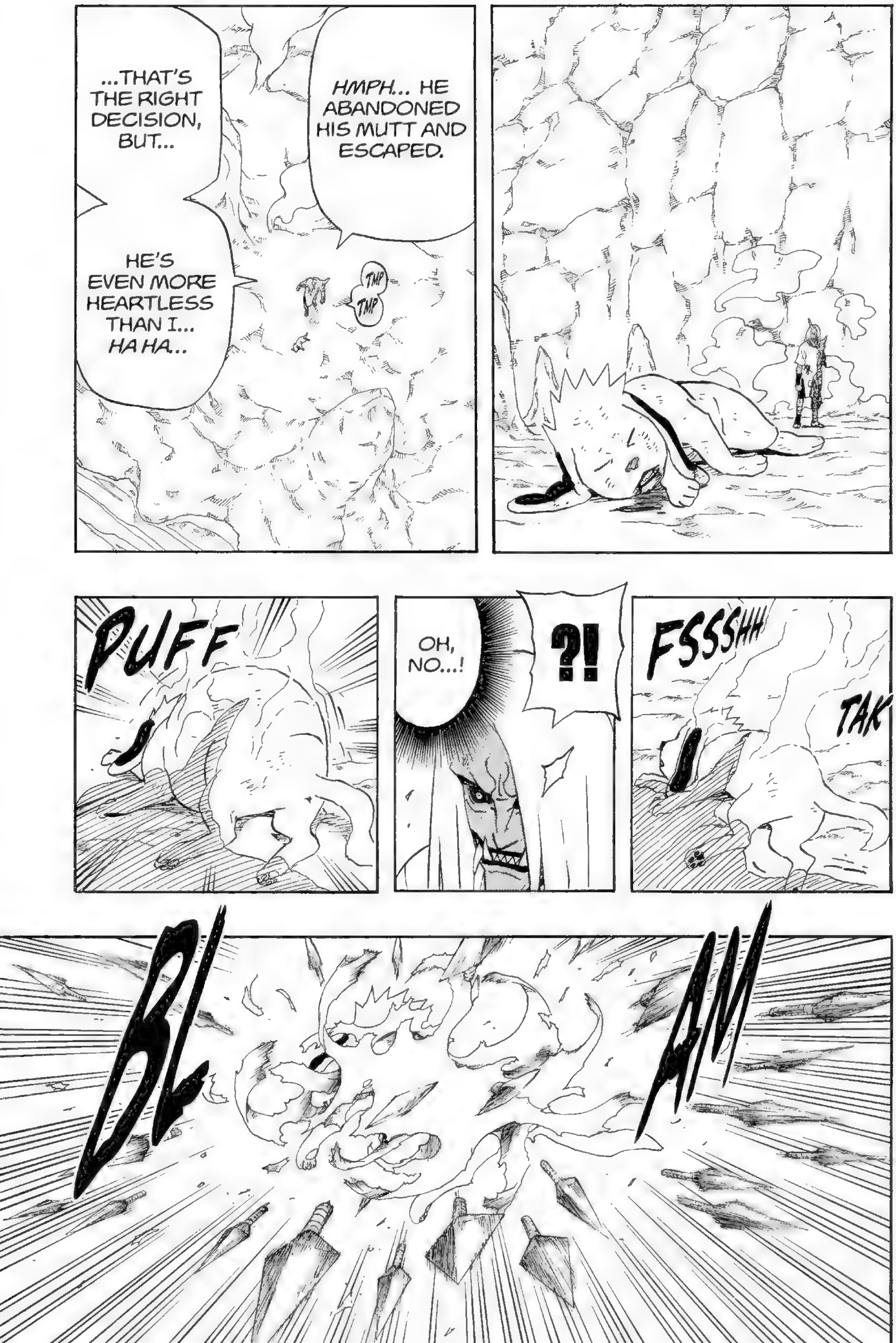

ZYUU
THUD
UGH...!
GLUG GLUG
I'M LOSING BLOOD...

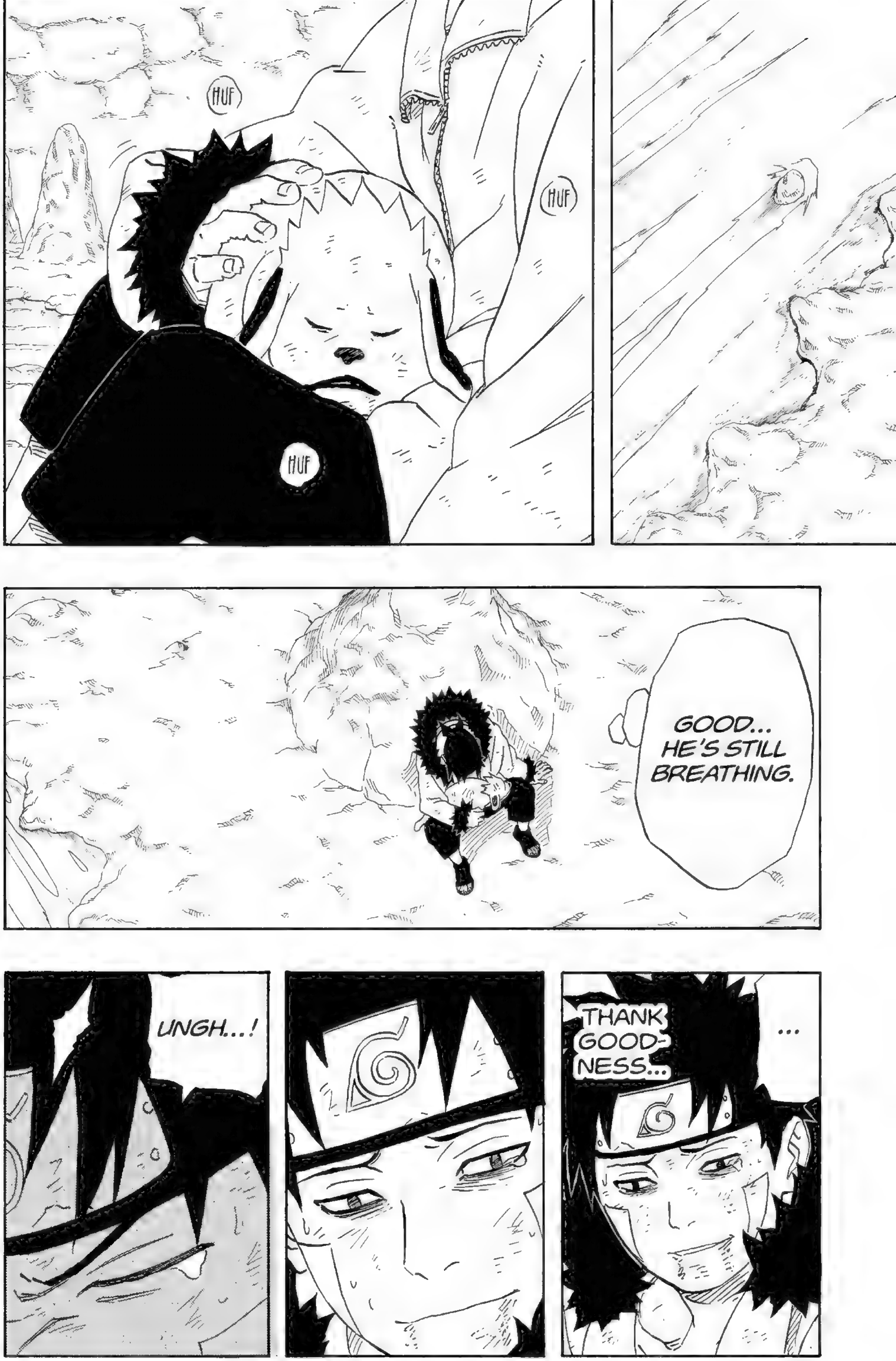
READ THIS WAY


ARGH...!
SHAK
!
FWIP
SHF
THUNK
TSK!
GUAK
SHAK
?!!

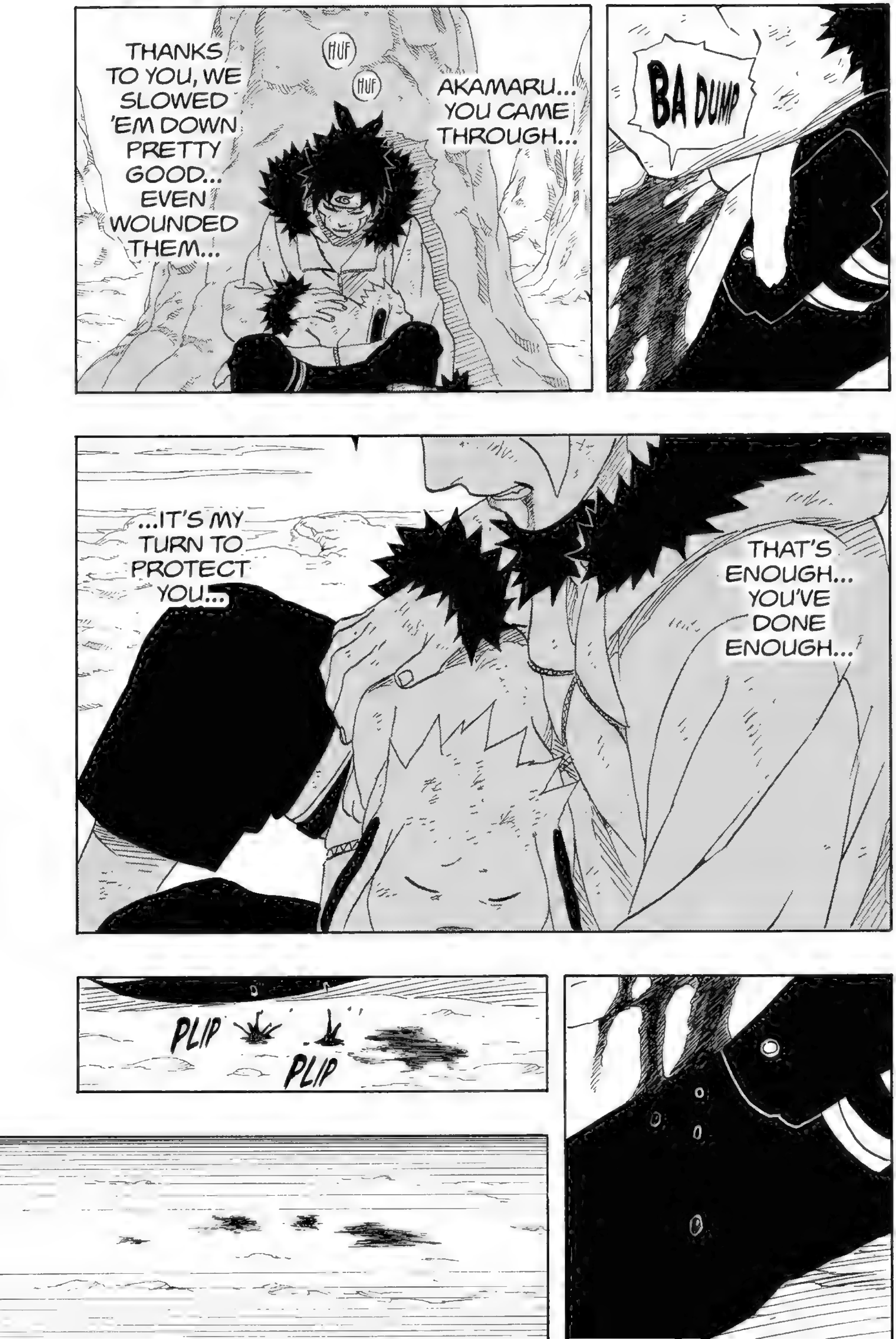

A SMOKE BOMB?!
BOOF
UGH!
BWAA
!
NO... WHERE DID HE GO...?
SHUP SHUP
!

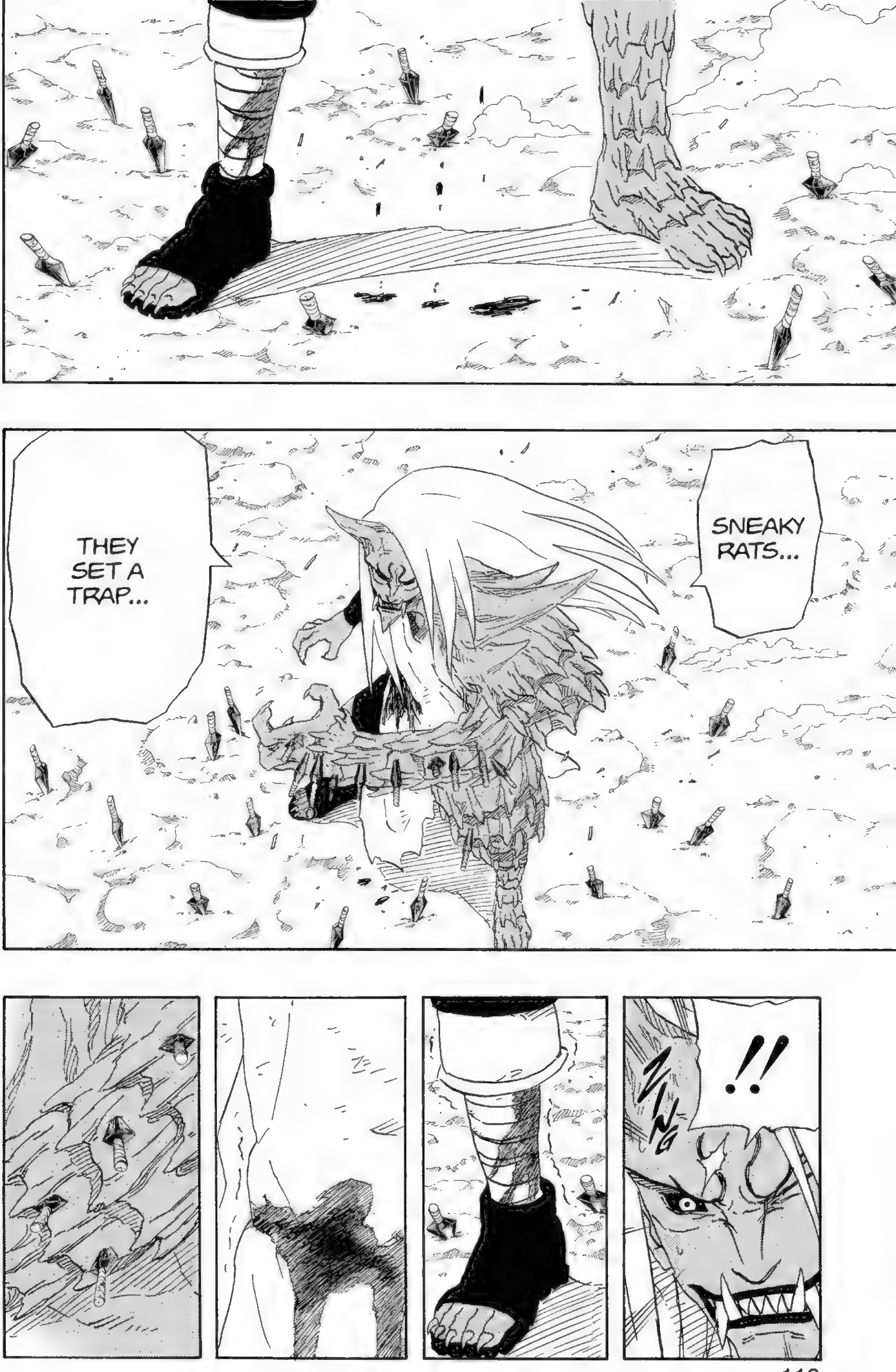
READ THIS WAY

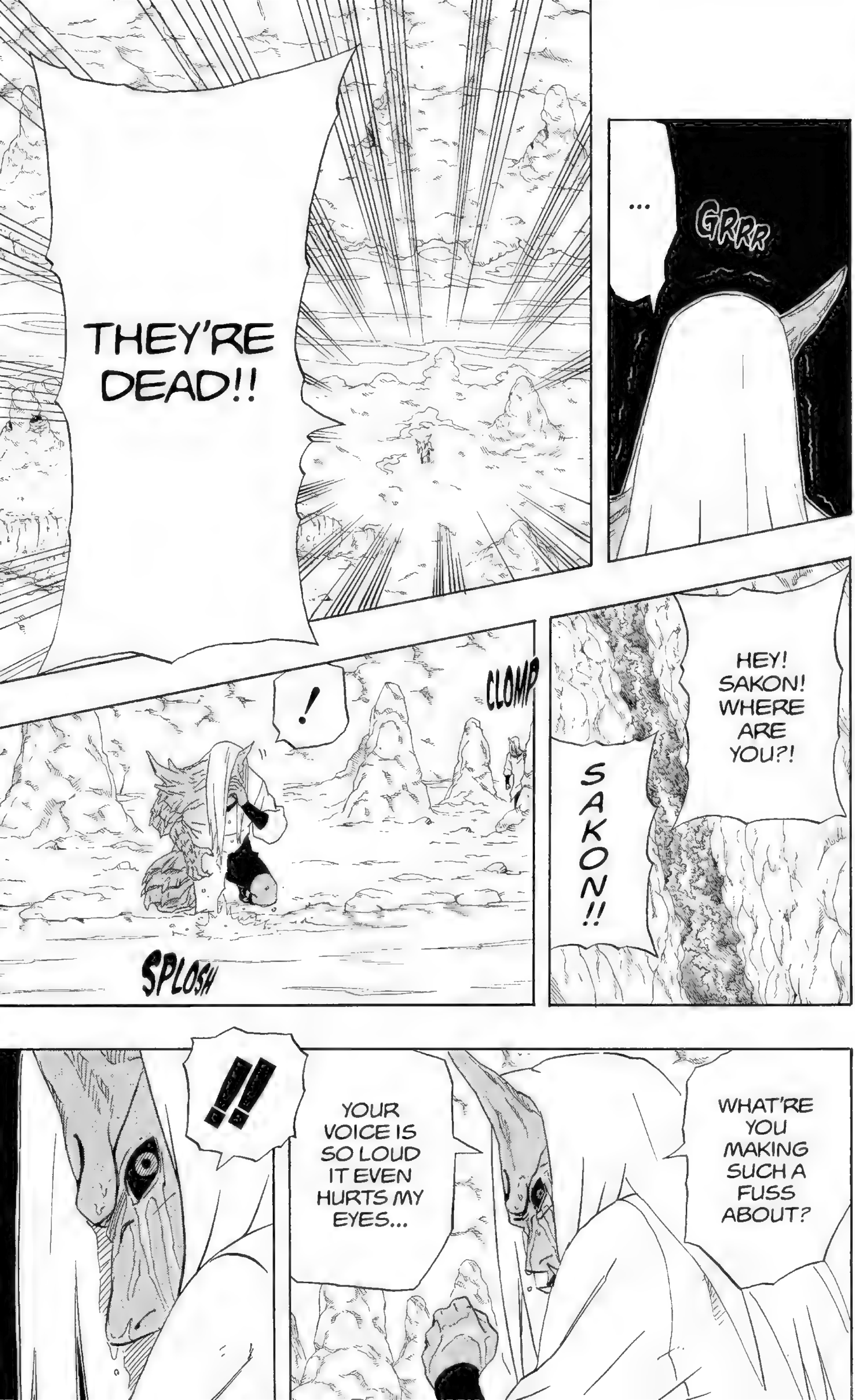

HMPH... HE ABANDONED HIS MUTT AND ESCAPED.
TMP TMP
...THAT'S THE RIGHT DECISION, BUT...
HE'S EVEN MORE HEARTLESS THAN I... HA HA...
FSSSHH
TAK
?!
OH, NO...!
PUFF
BLAM

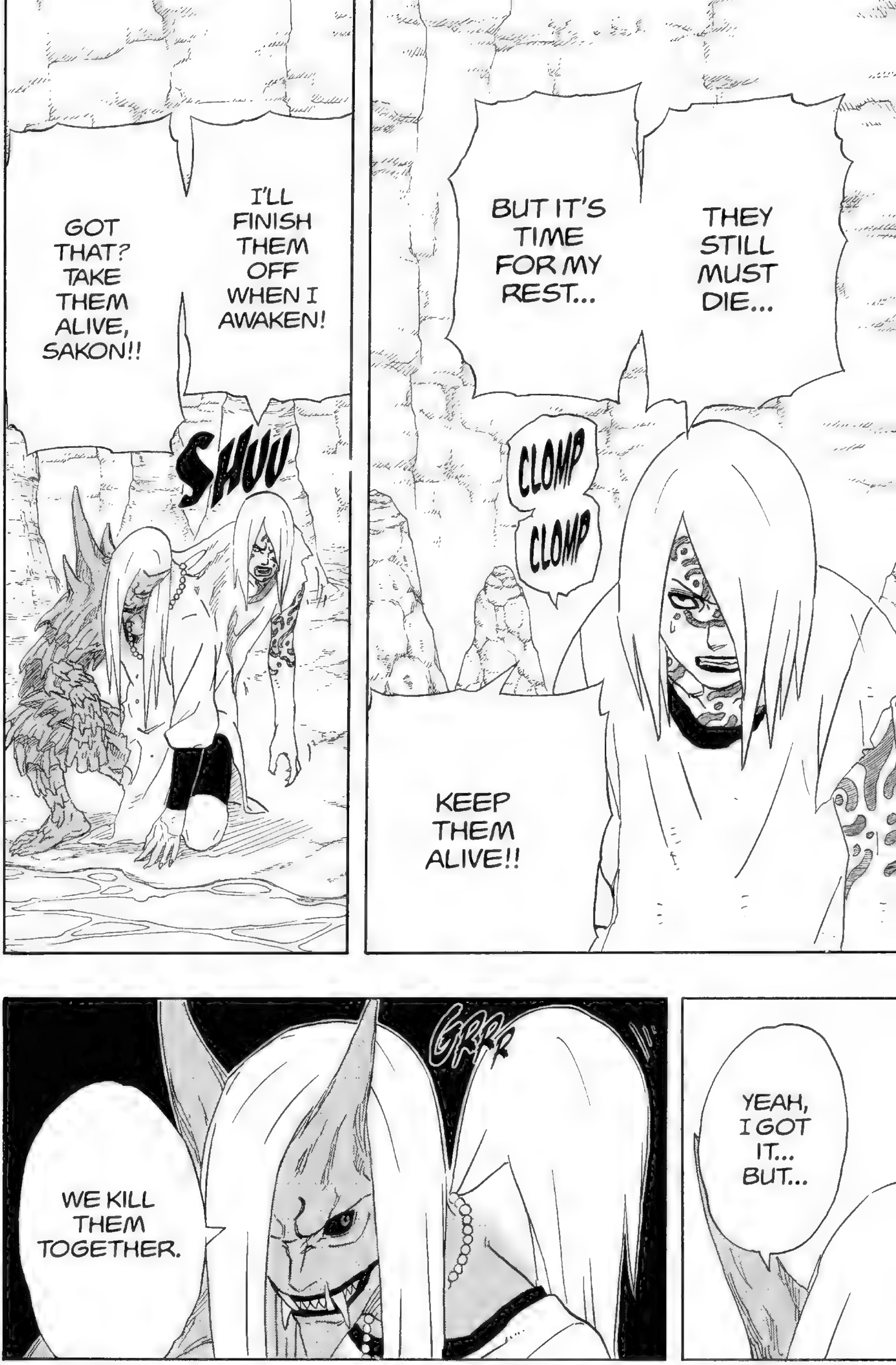

HUF
HUF
HUF
GOOD... HE'S STILL BREATHING.
...
THANK GOODNESS...
UNGH...!

READ THIS WAY

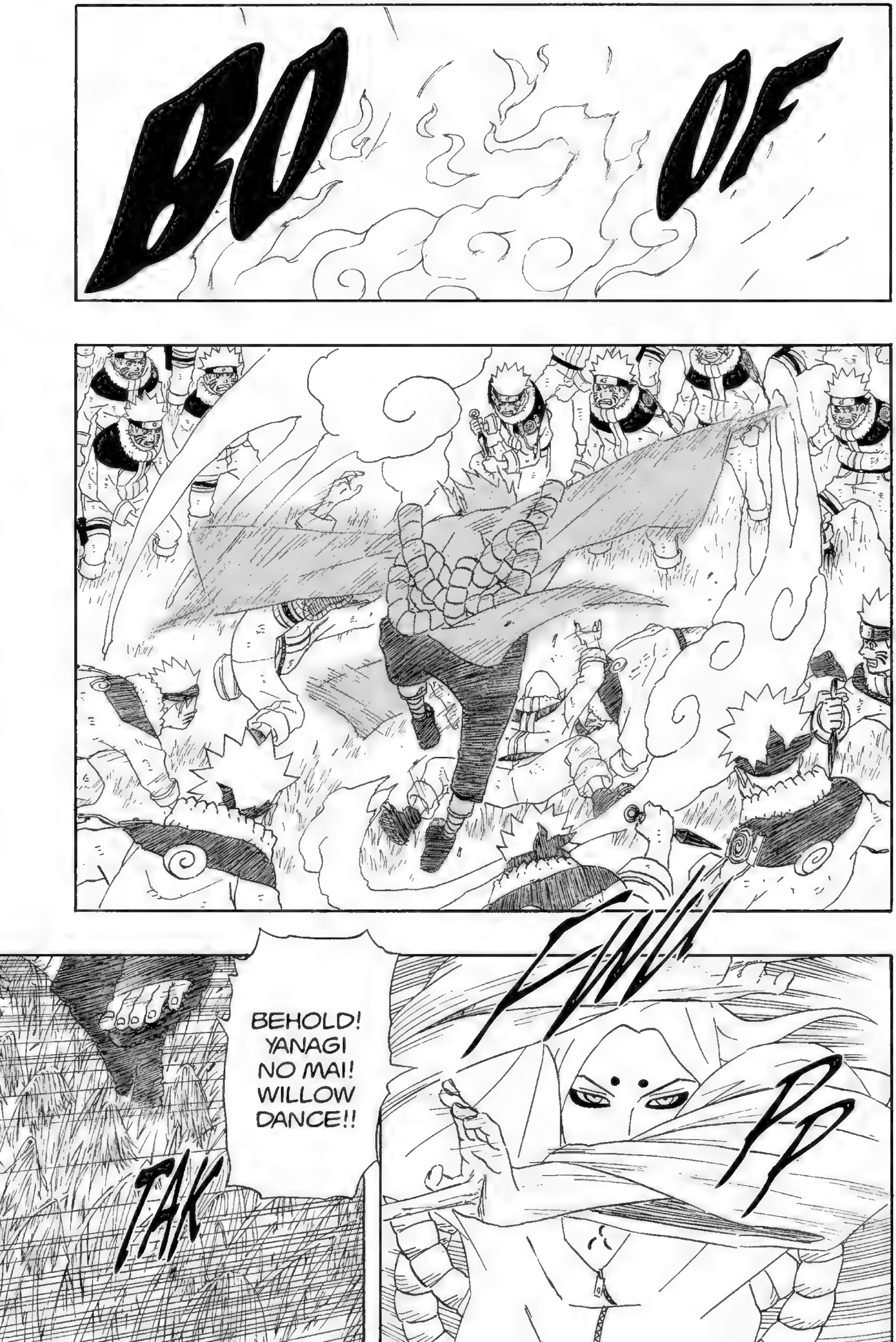

BA DUMP
AKAMARU... YOU CAME THROUGH...
HUF
HUF
THANKS TO YOU, WE SLOWED 'EM DOWN PRETTY GOOD... EVEN WOUNDED THEM...
THAT'S ENOUGH... YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH...
...IT'S MY TURN TO PROTECT YOU...
PLIP
PLIP

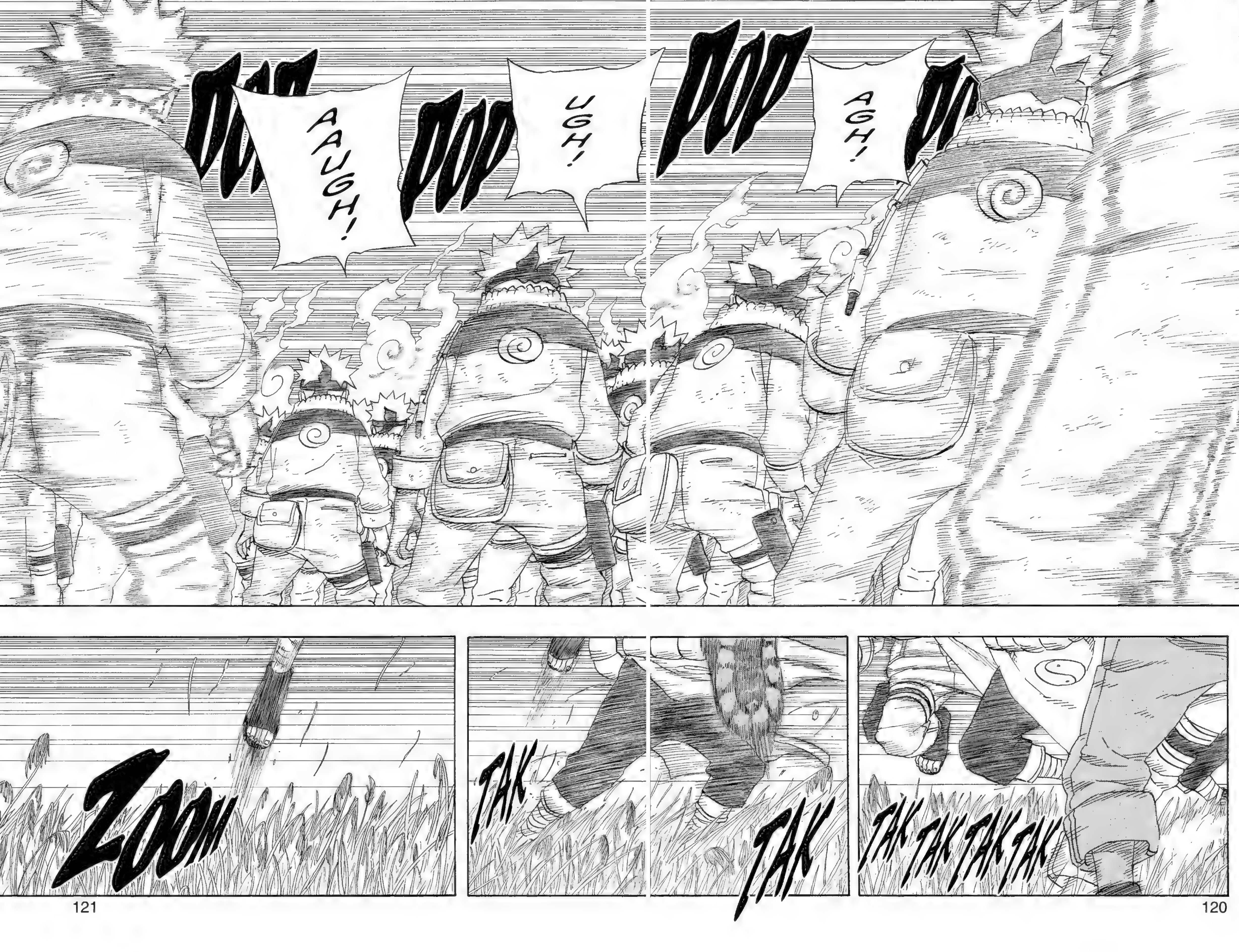

SNEAKY RATS...
THEY SET A TRAP...
!!
ZING

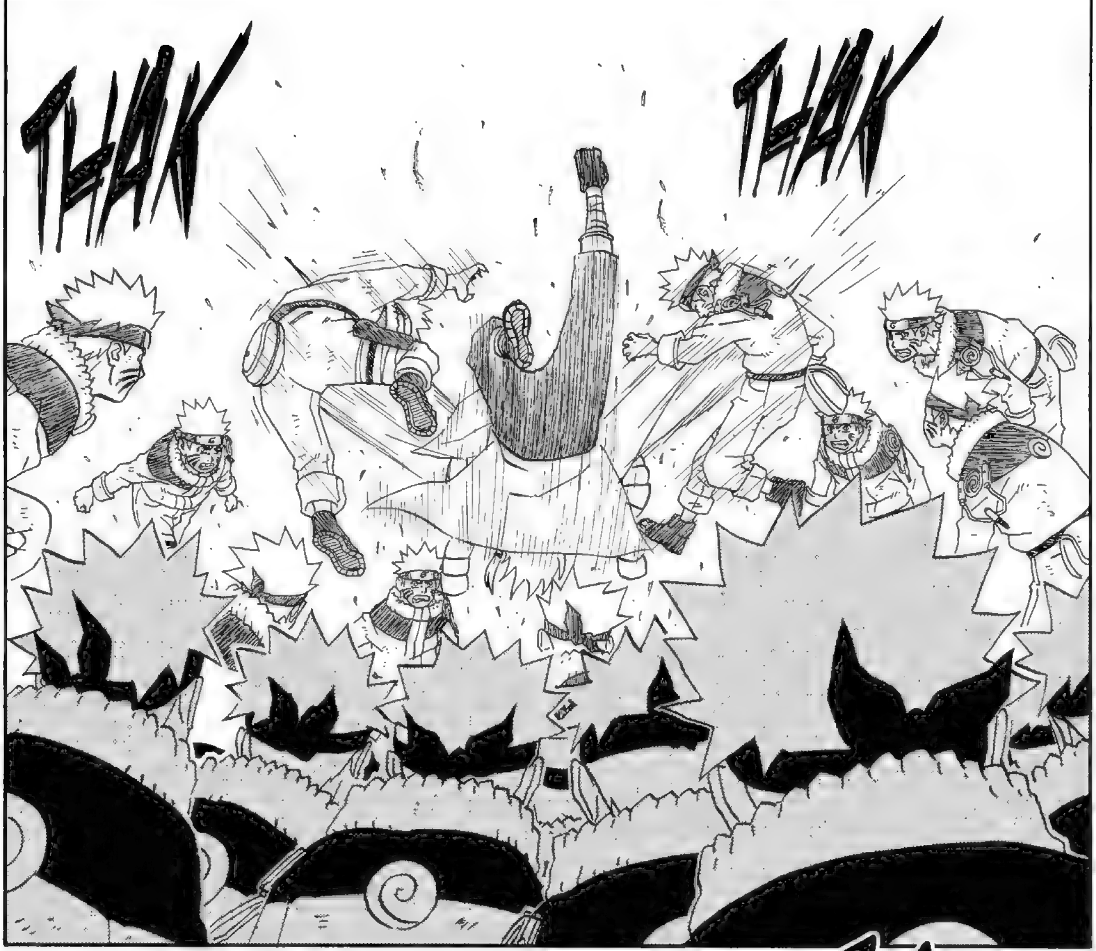

...
GRRR
THEY'RE DEAD!!
HEY! SAKON! WHERE ARE YOU?!
SAKON!!
CLOMP
!
SPLOSH
WHAT'RE YOU MAKING SUCH A FUSS ABOUT?
YOUR VOICE IS SO LOUD IT EVEN HURTS MY EYES...
!!

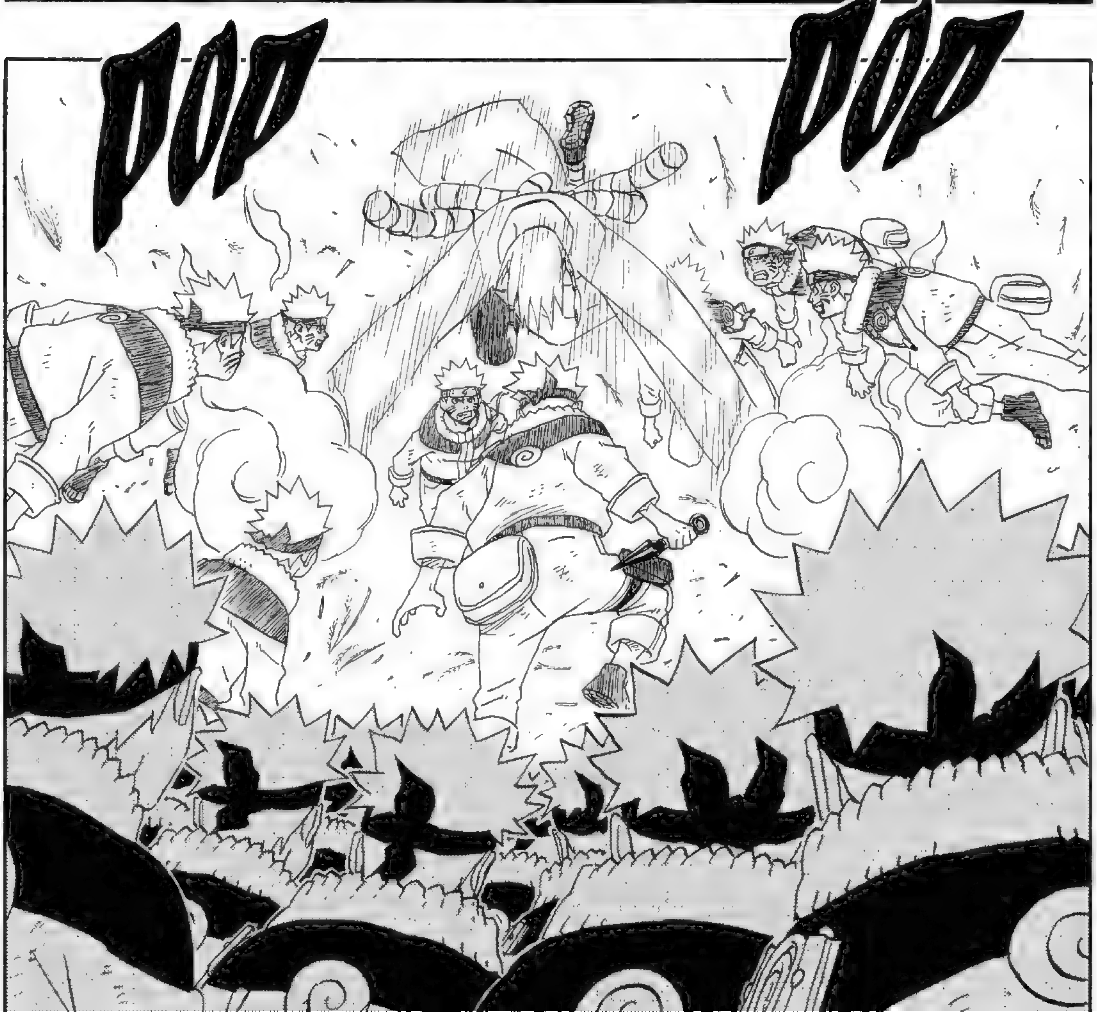

THEY STILL MUST DIE...
BUT IT'S TIME FOR MY REST...
CLOMP CLOMP
KEEP THEM ALIVE!!
I'LL FINISH THEM OFF WHEN I AWAKEN!
GOT THAT? TAKE THEM ALIVE, SAKON!!
SHUU
YEAH, I GOT IT... BUT...
GRRR
WE KILL THEM TOGETHER.

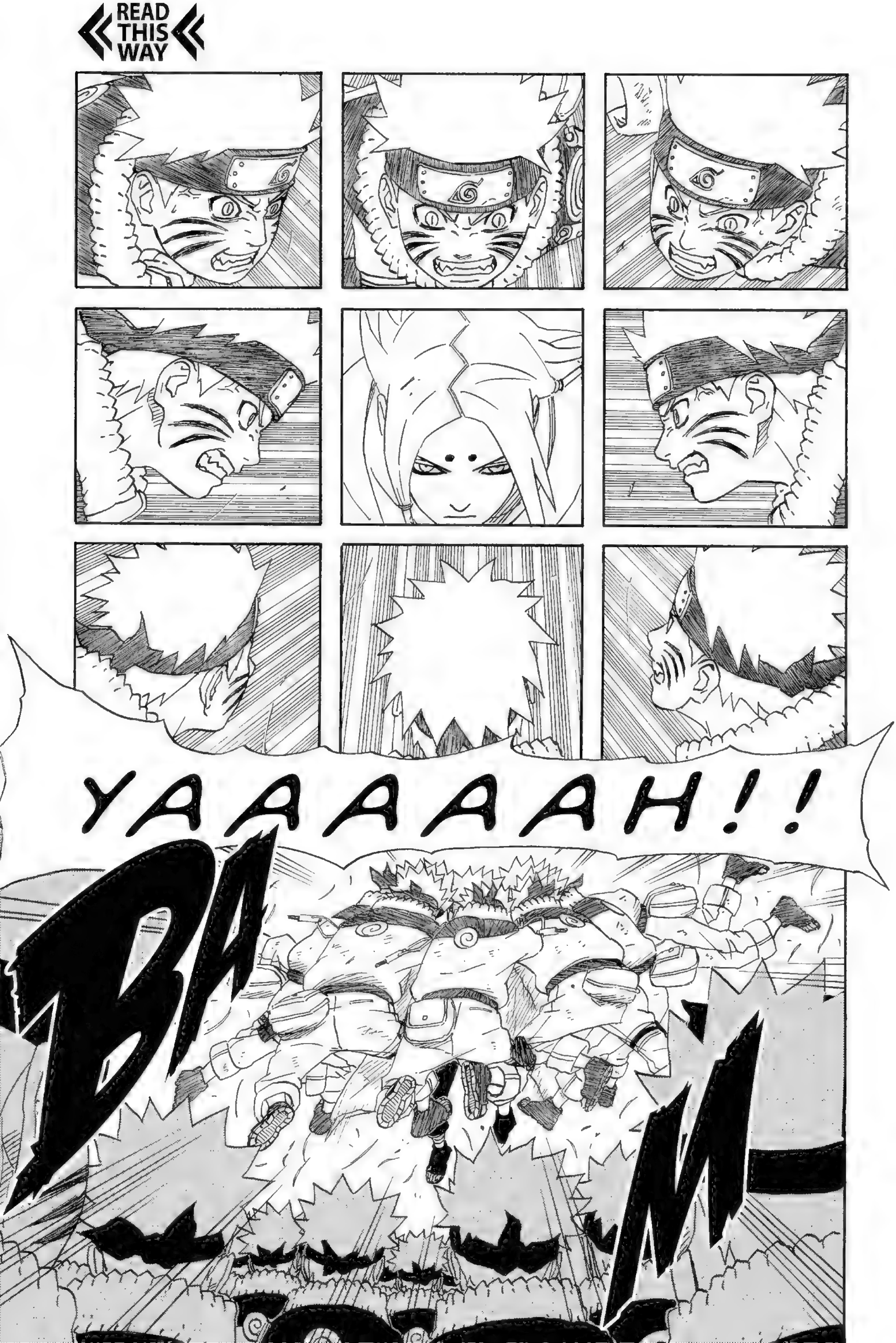
READ THIS WAY

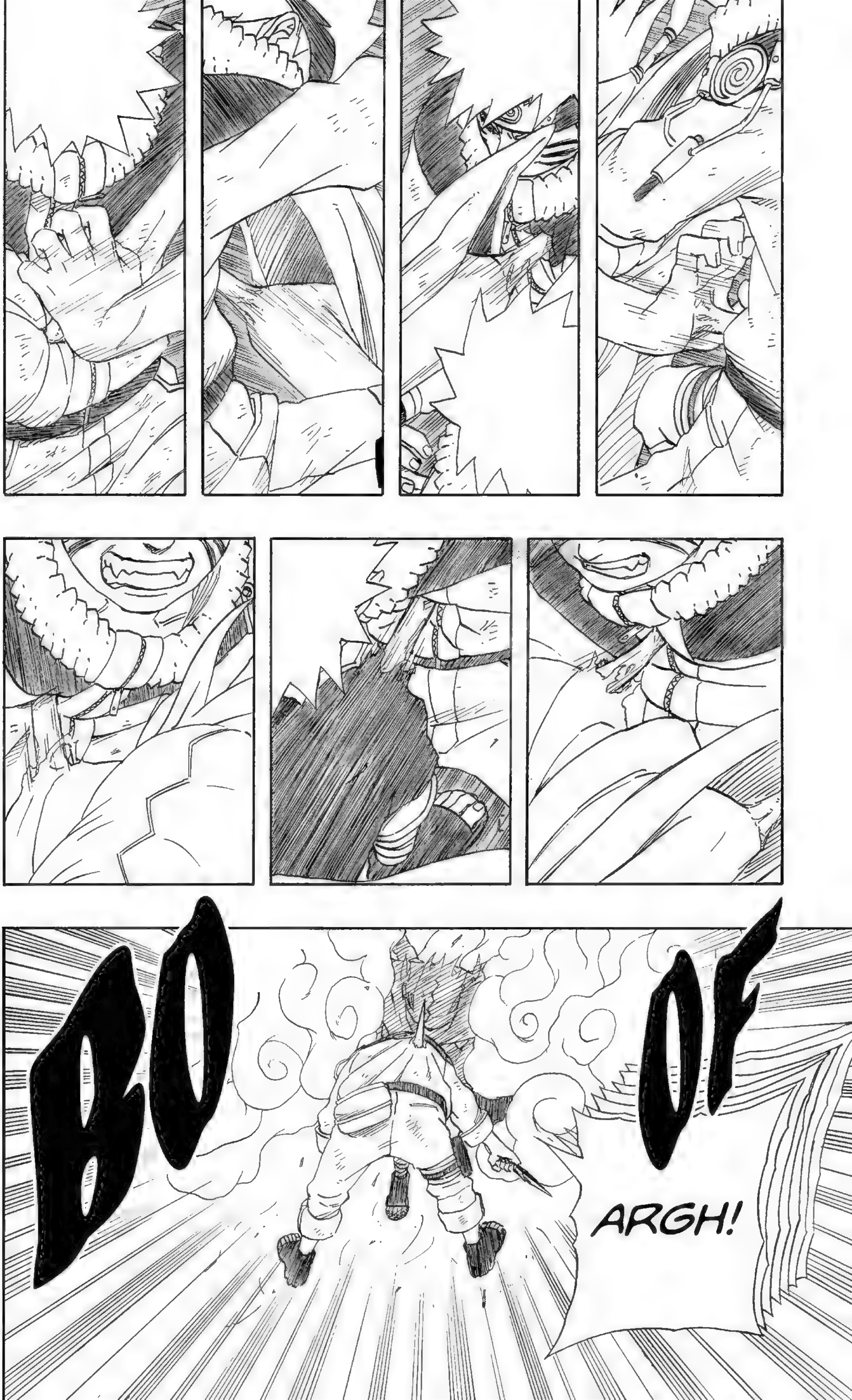

BO OF
FWU
PP
BEHOLD! YANAGI NO MAI! WILLOW DANCE!!
TAK

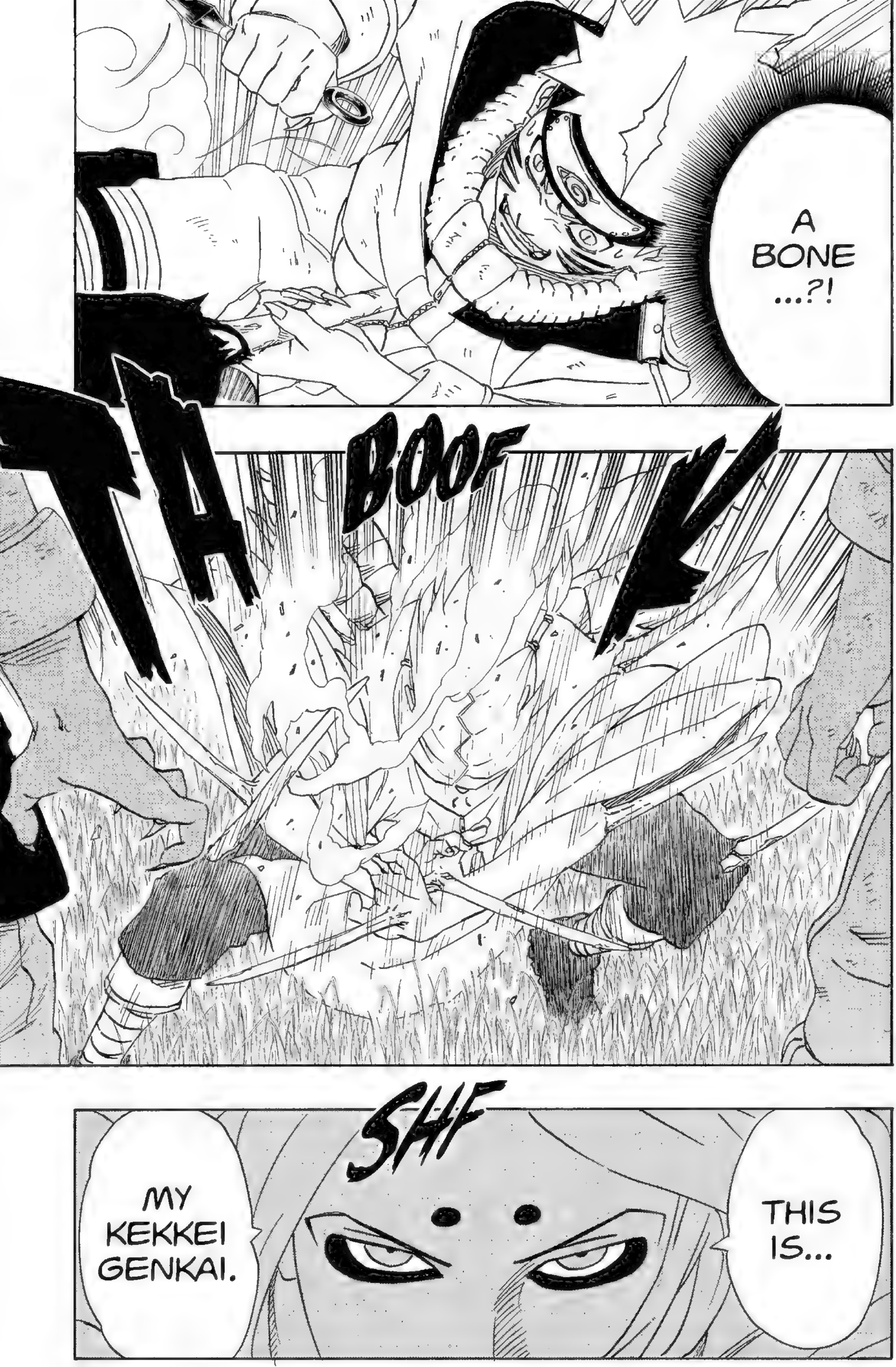

AGH!
POP
UGH!
POP
AAUGH!
TAK TAK TAK TAK
TAK
TAK
ZOOM

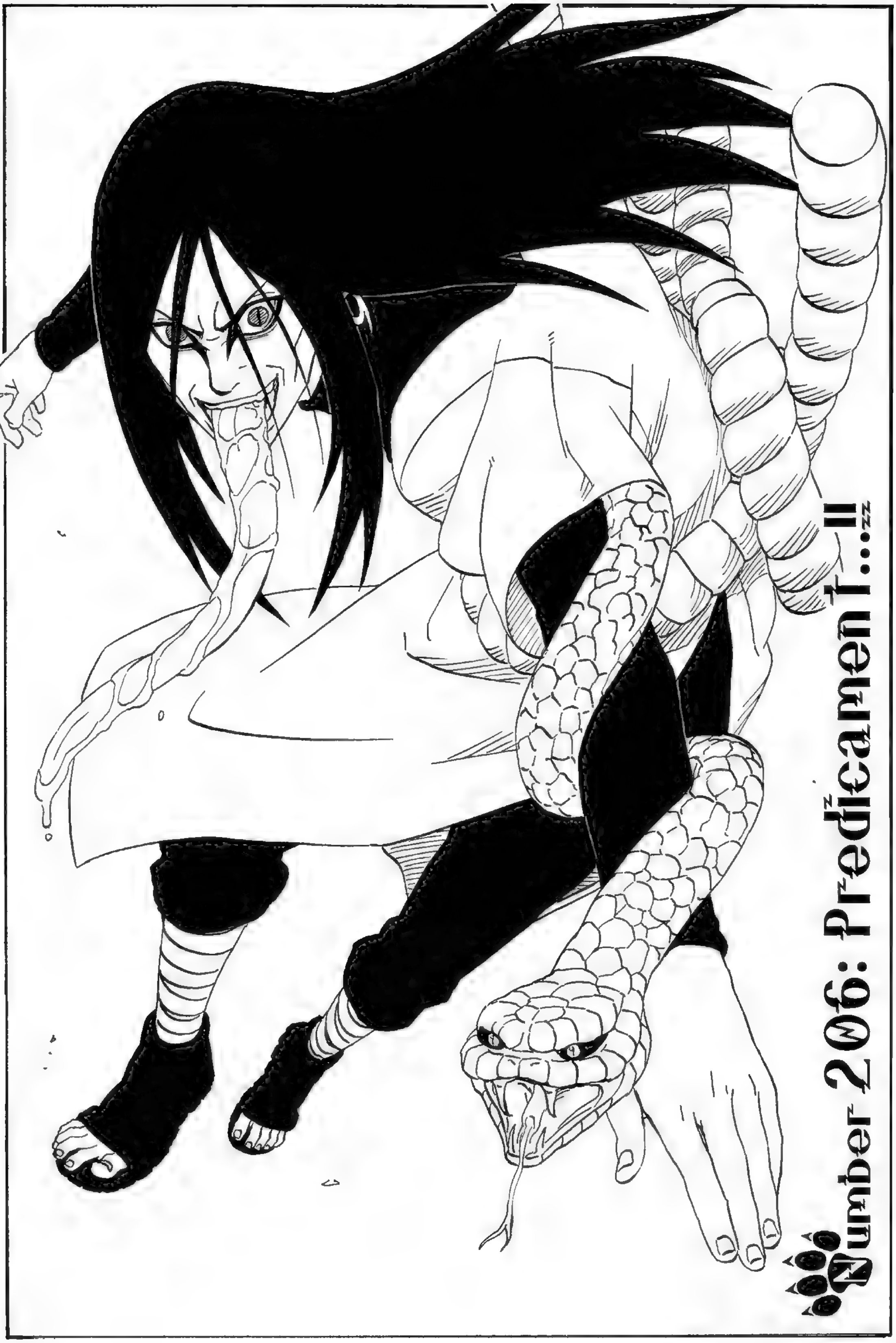

THAK
THAK


POP
POP

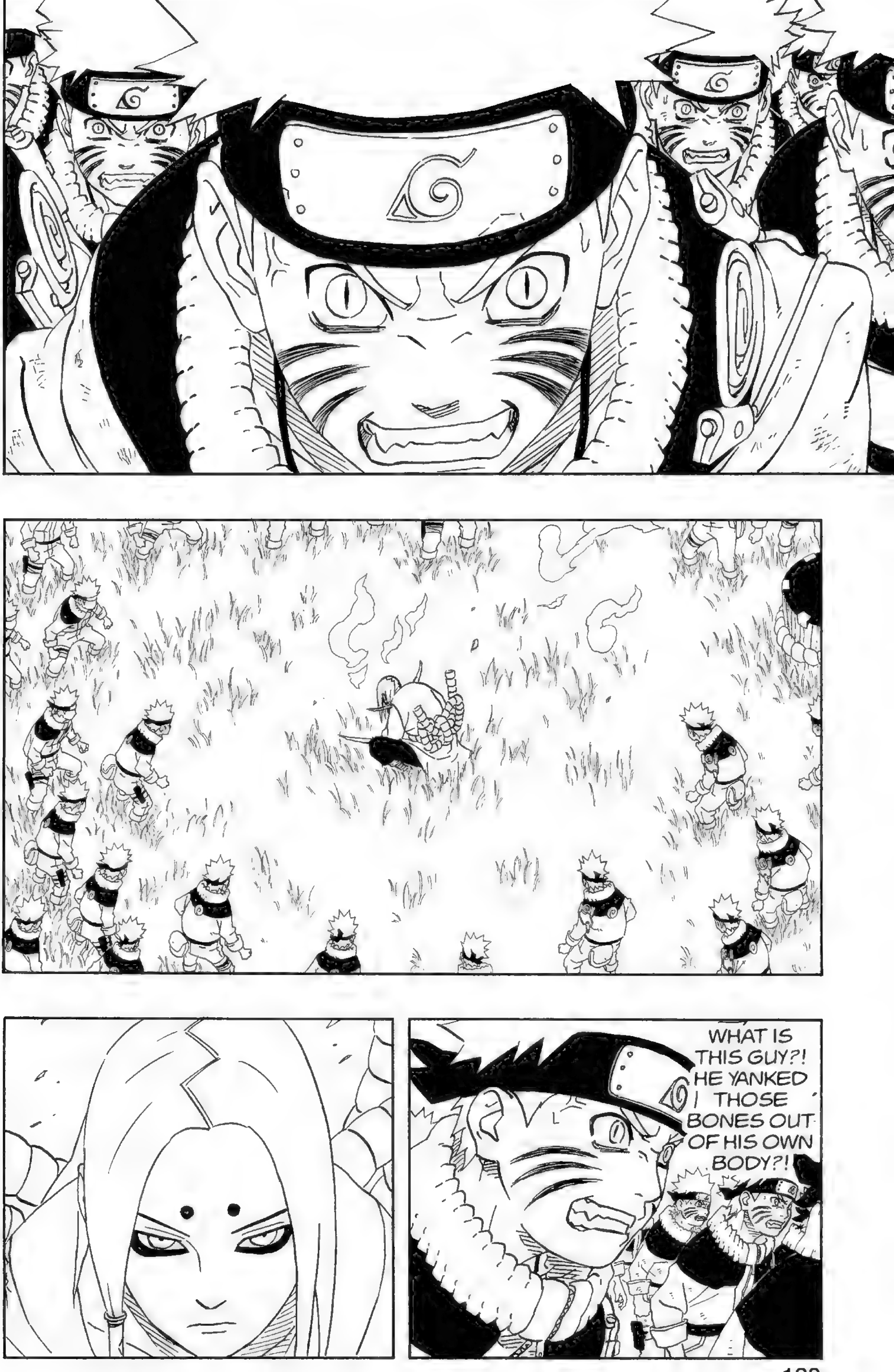

READ THIS WAY
YAAAAAAH!!
BAM


BOOF
ARGH!

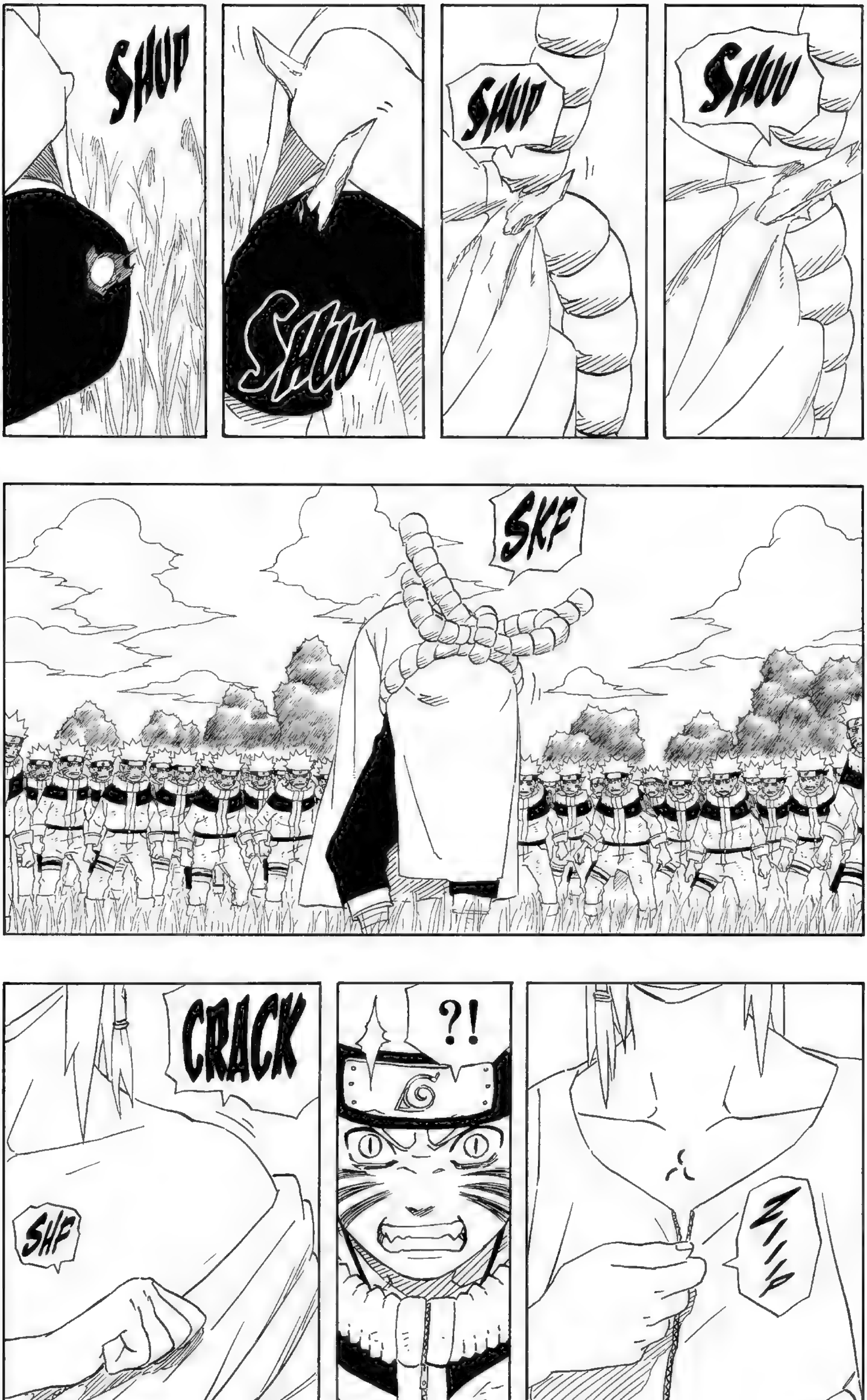

A BONE ...?!
THA
BOOF
K
SHF
THIS IS...
MY KEKKEI GENKAI.

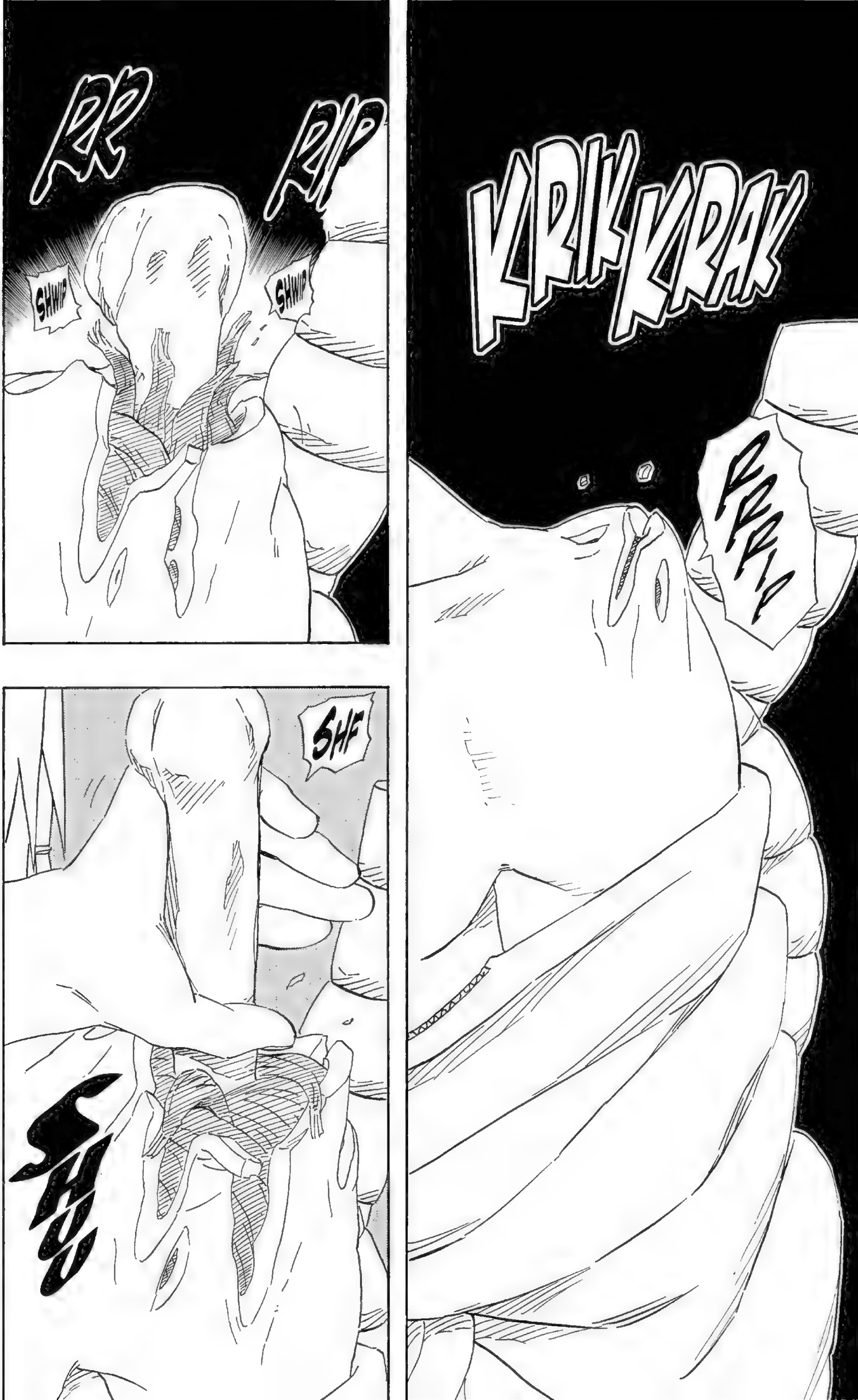


Number 206: Predicament…!!

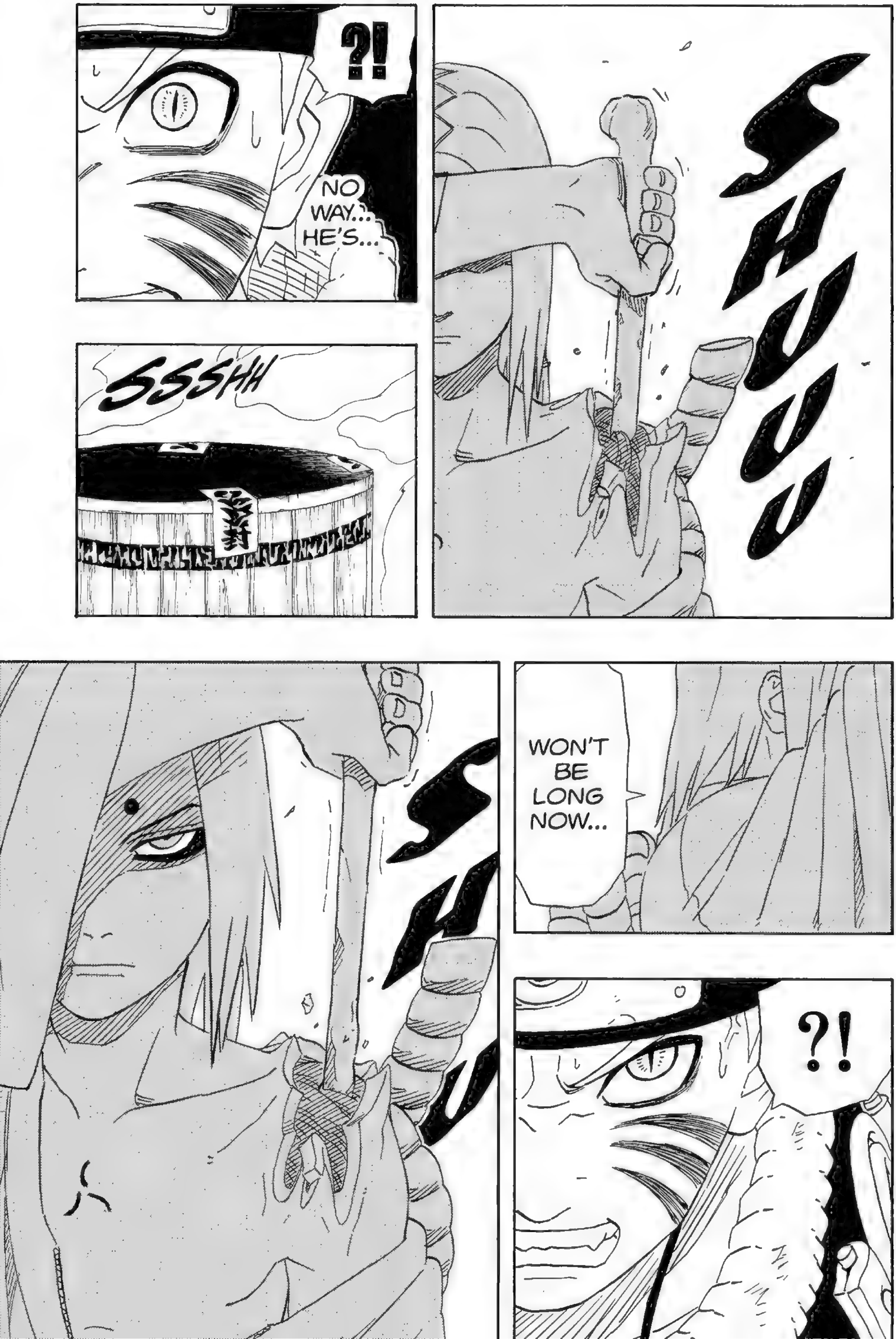

WHAT IS THIS GUY?! HE YANKED THOSE BONES OUT OF HIS OWN BODY?!

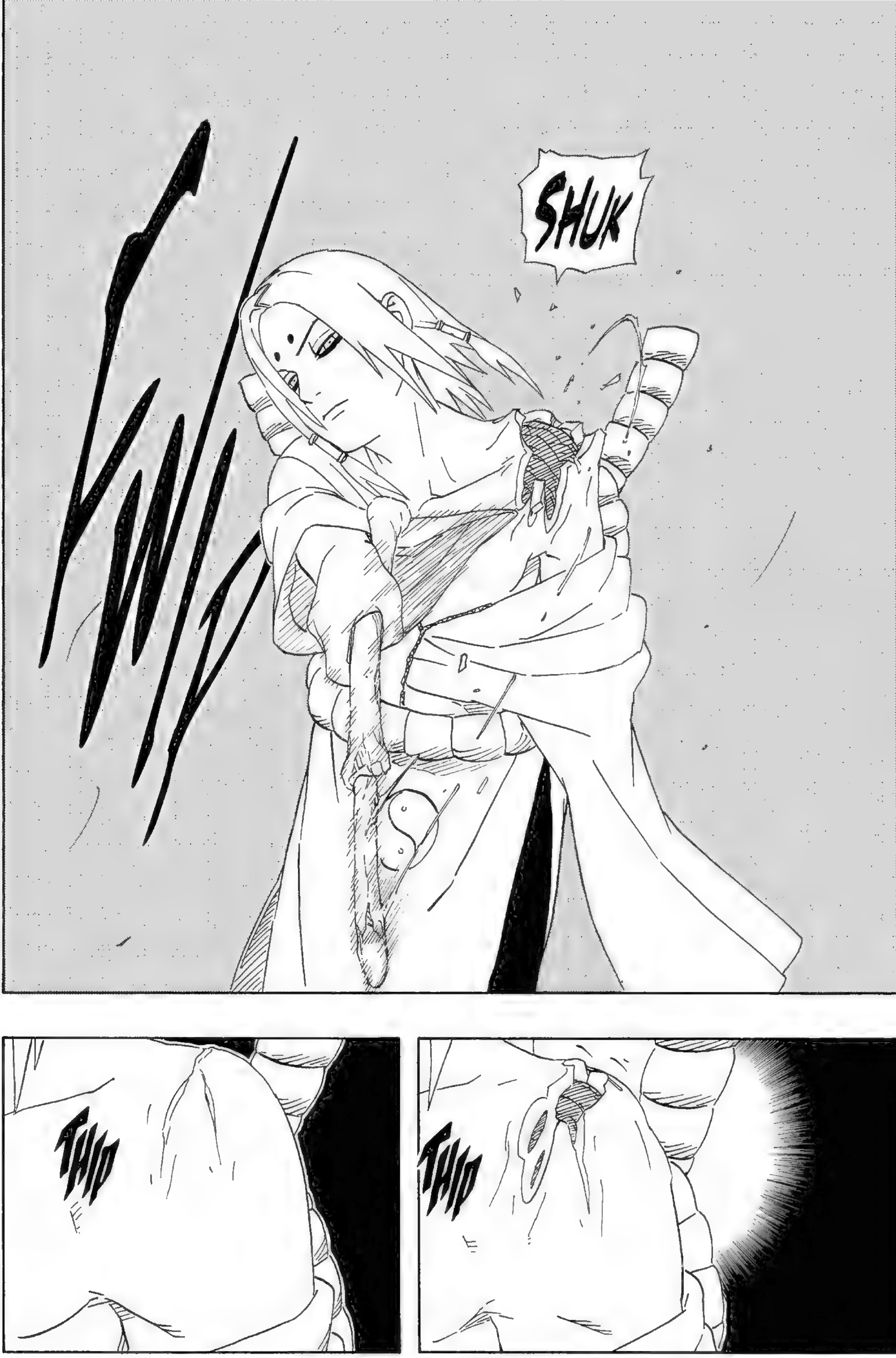
READ THIS WAY


SHUU
SHUP
SHUU
SHUP
SKF
ZIIP
?!
CRACK
SHF

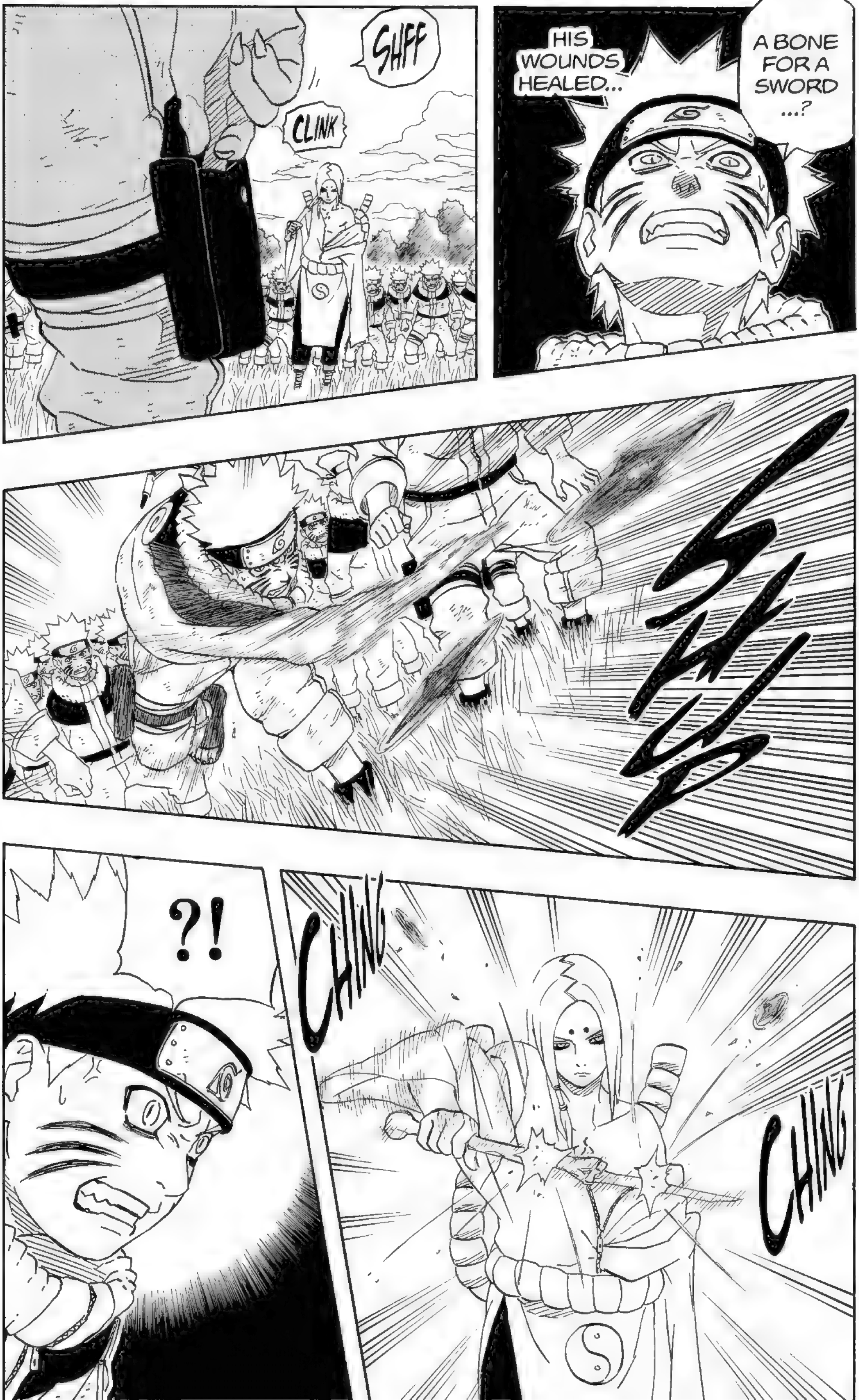

KRIK KRAK
RRRIP
RIP
RIP
SHWIP
SHWIP
SHF
SHHH

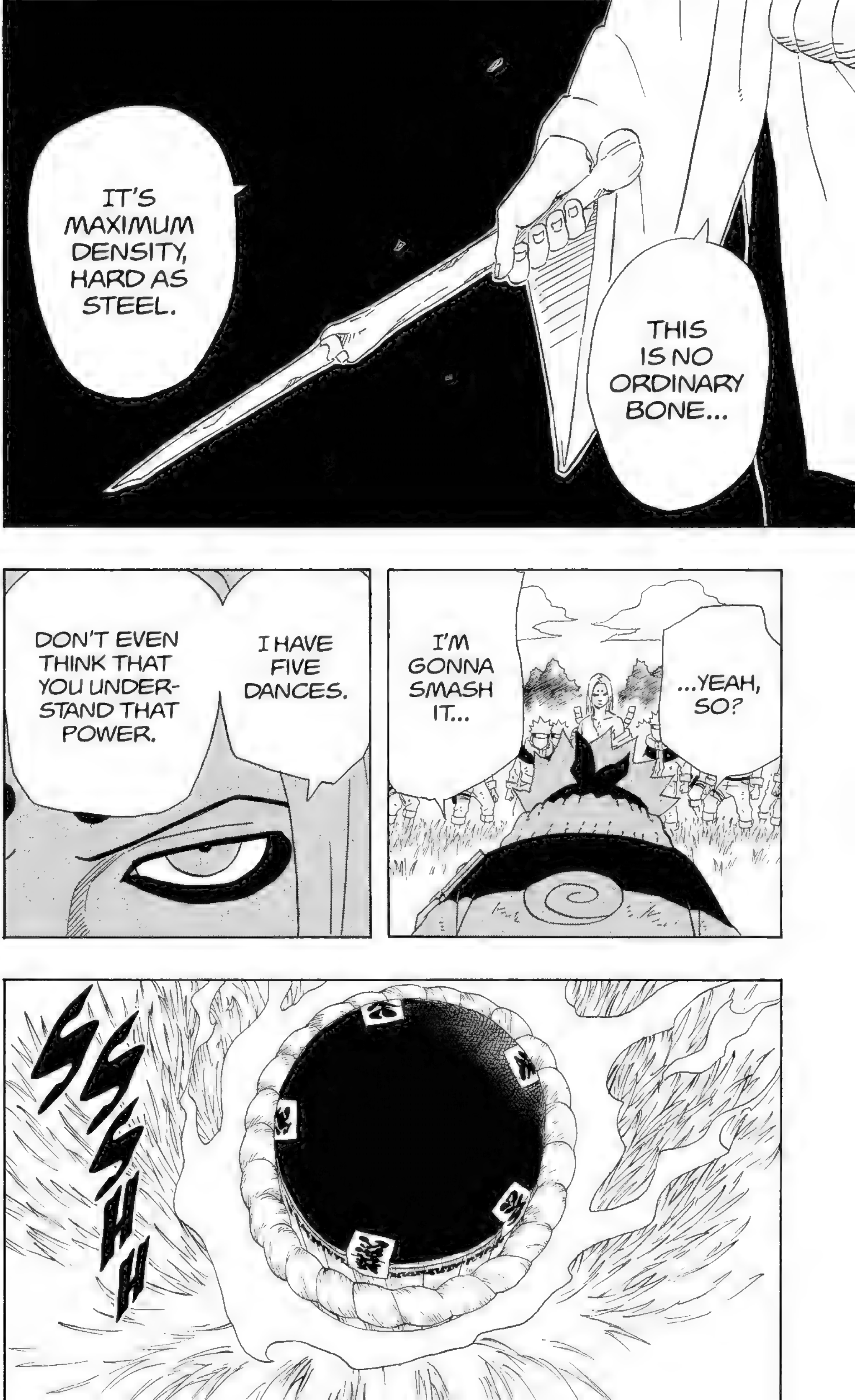
READ THIS WAY

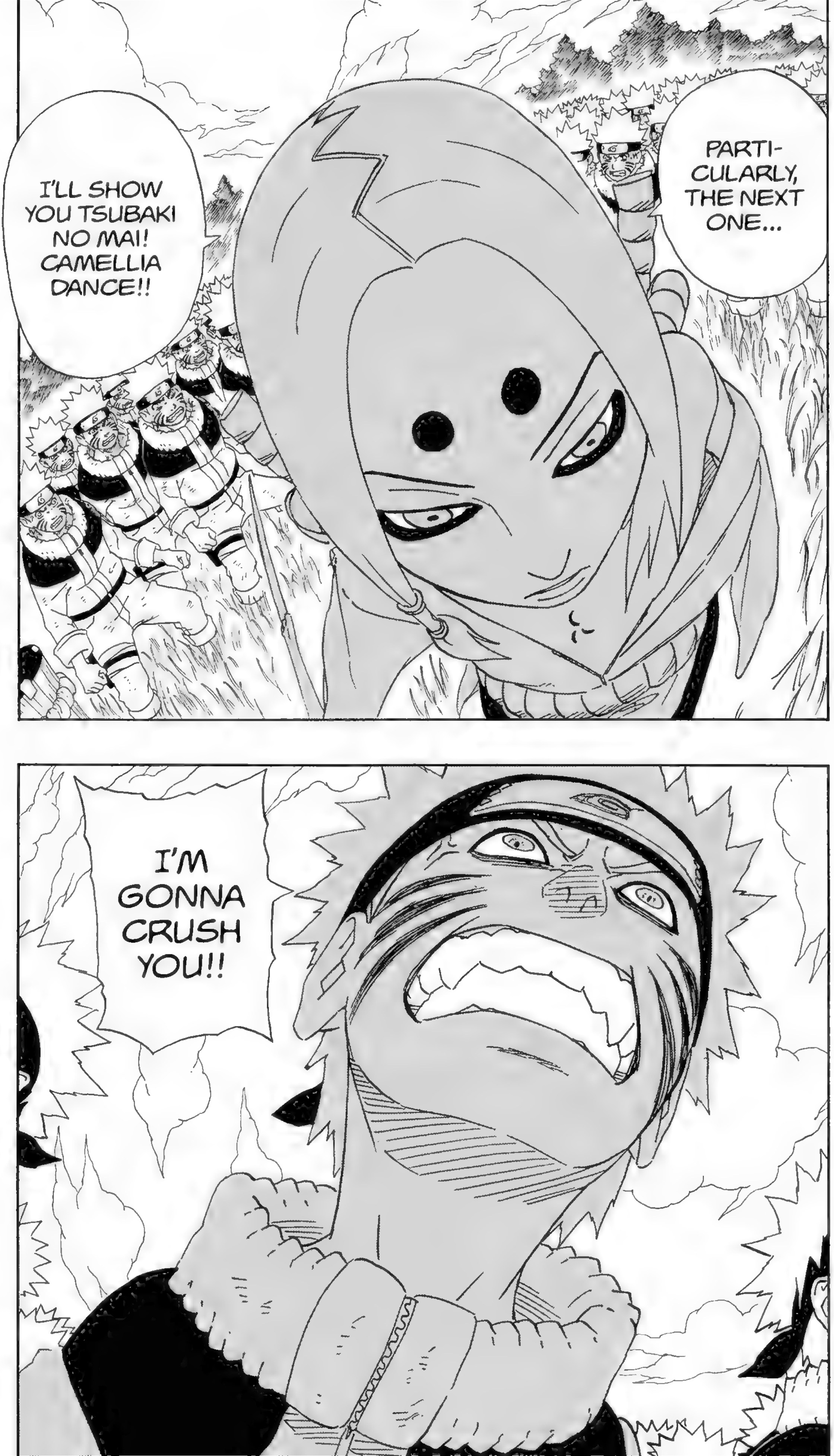

SHUUU
?!
NO WAY... HE'S...
SSSHH
WON'T BE LONG NOW...
?!
SHU

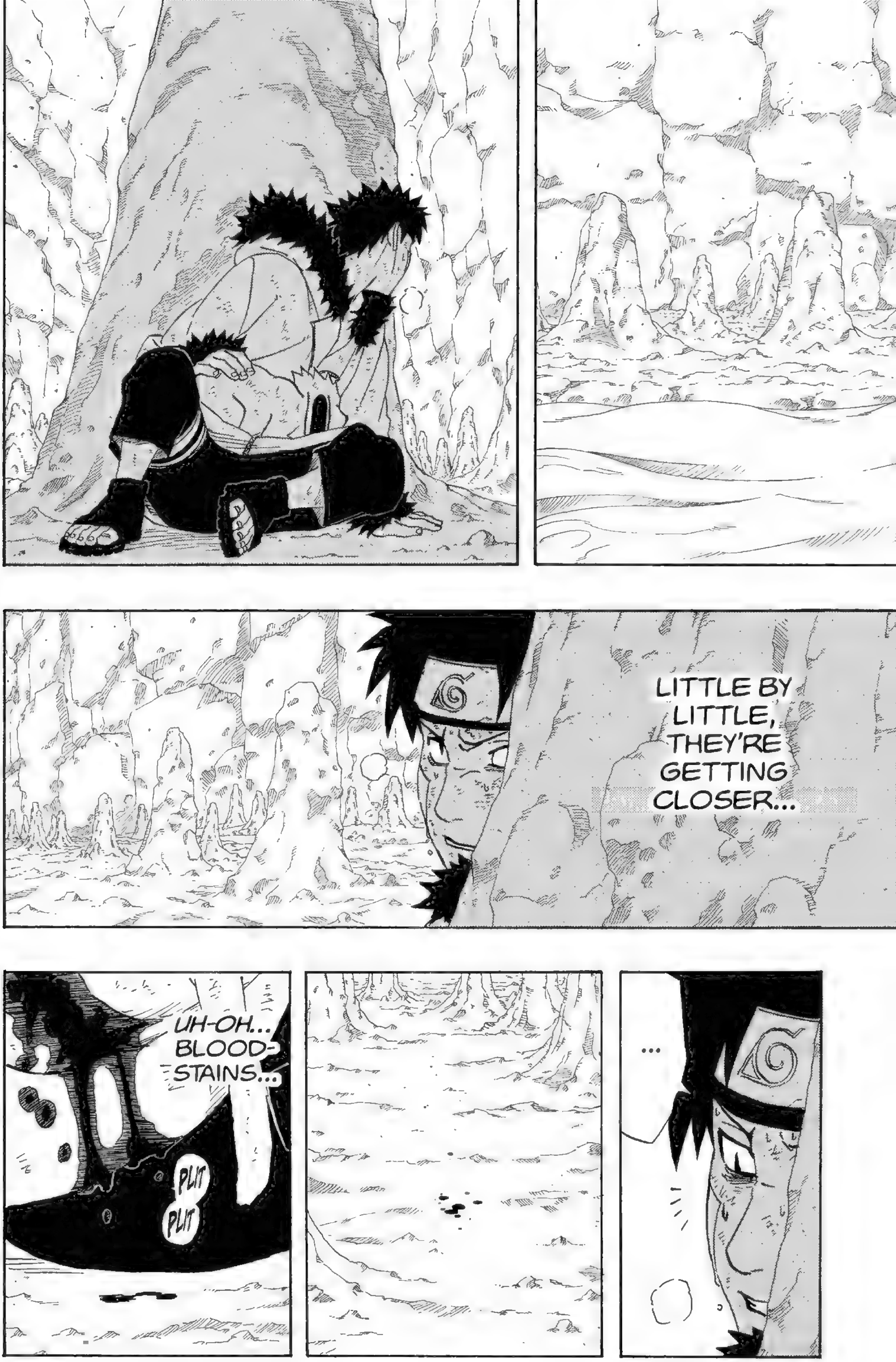

SHUK
THIP
THIP

READ THIS WAY

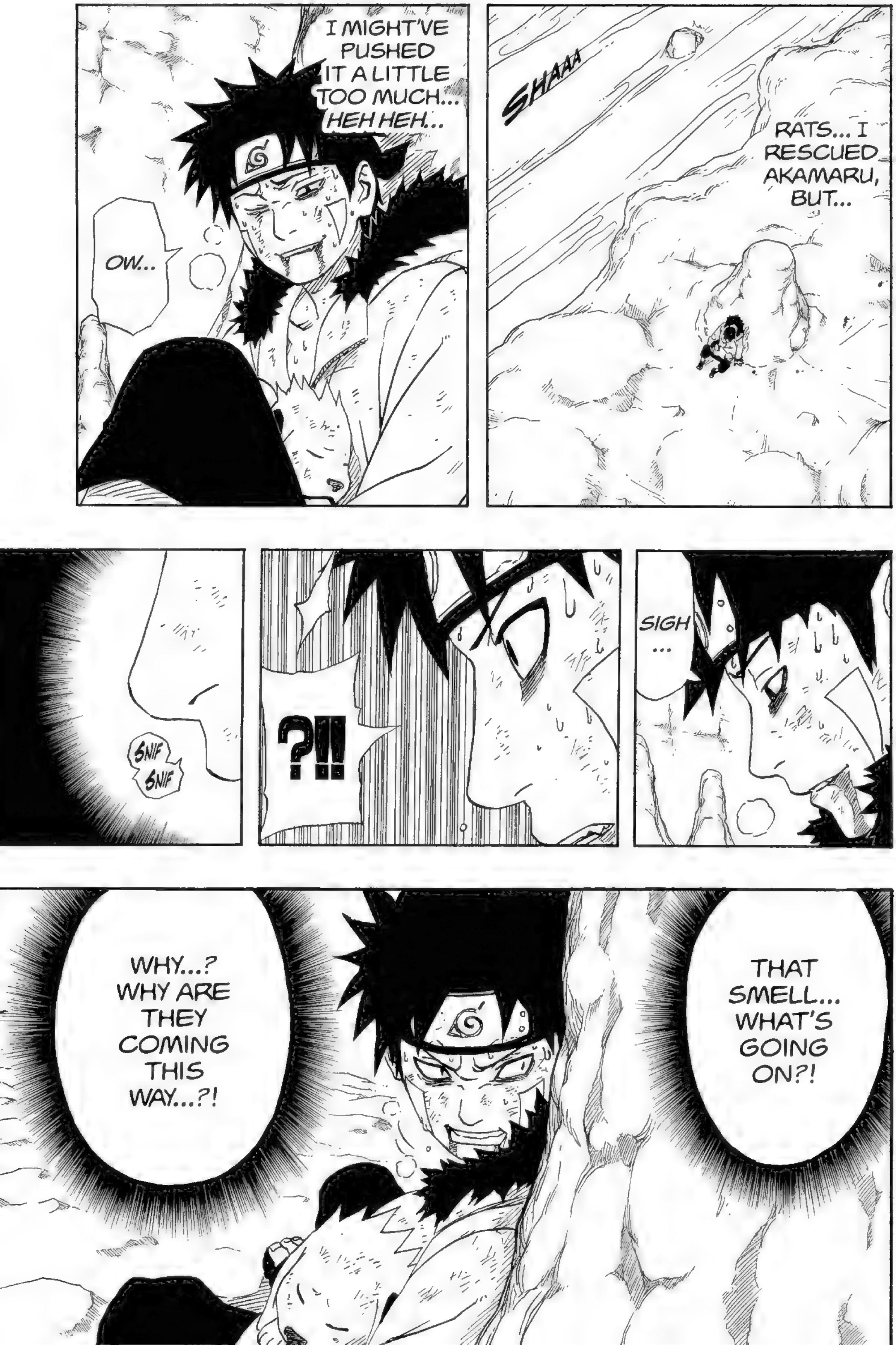

A BONE FOR A SWORD ...?
HIS WOUNDS HEALED...
SHFF
CLINK
CHING
CHING
?!

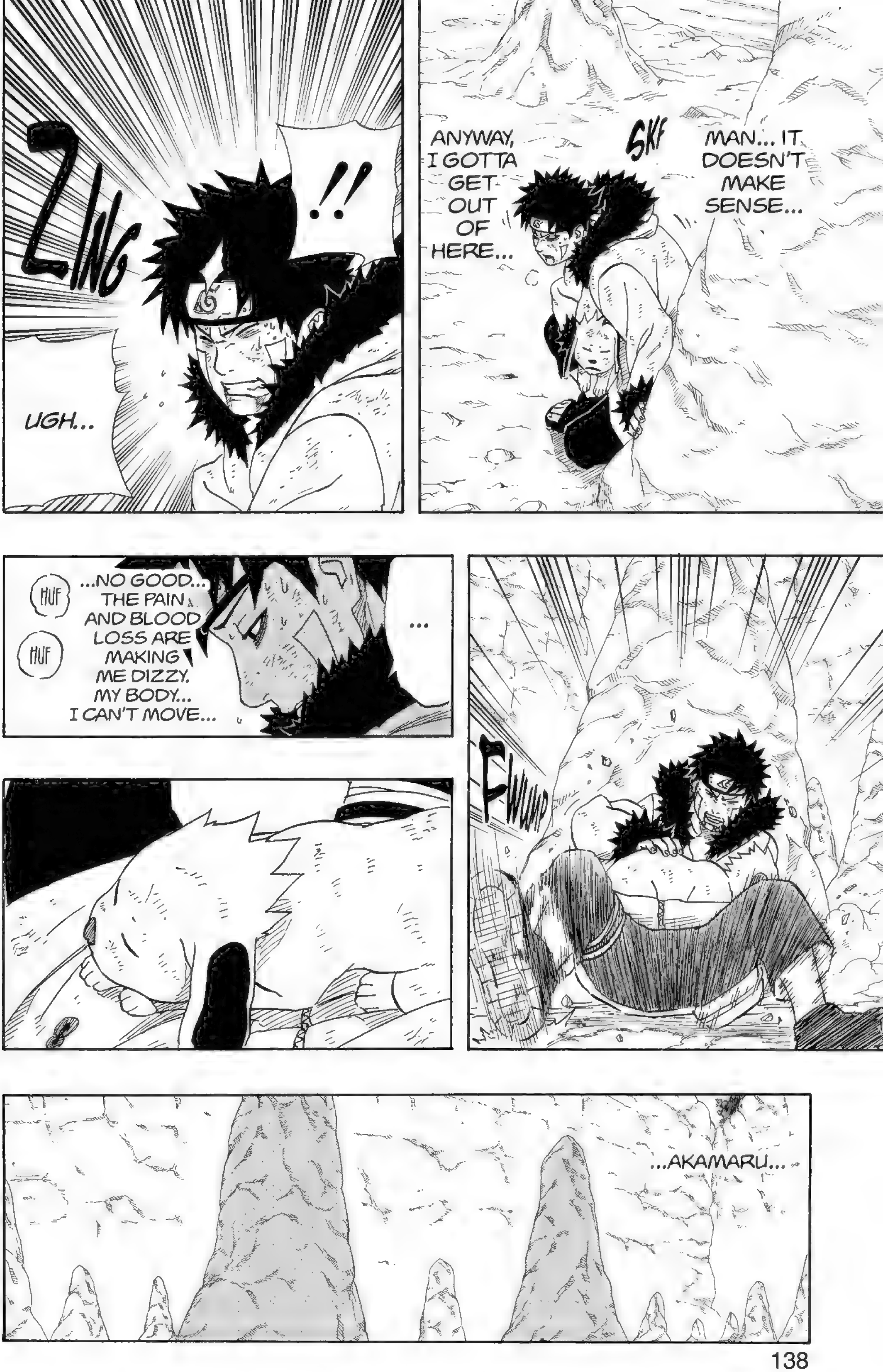

THIS IS NO ORDINARY BONE...
IT'S MAXIMUM DENSITY, HARD AS STEEL.
...YEAH, SO?
I'M GONNA SMASH IT...
I HAVE FIVE DANCES.
DON'T EVEN THINK THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THAT POWER.
SSSHH


PARTICULARLY, THE NEXT ONE...
I'LL SHOW YOU TSUBAKI NO MAI! CAMELLIA DANCE!!
I'M GONNA CRUSH YOU!!

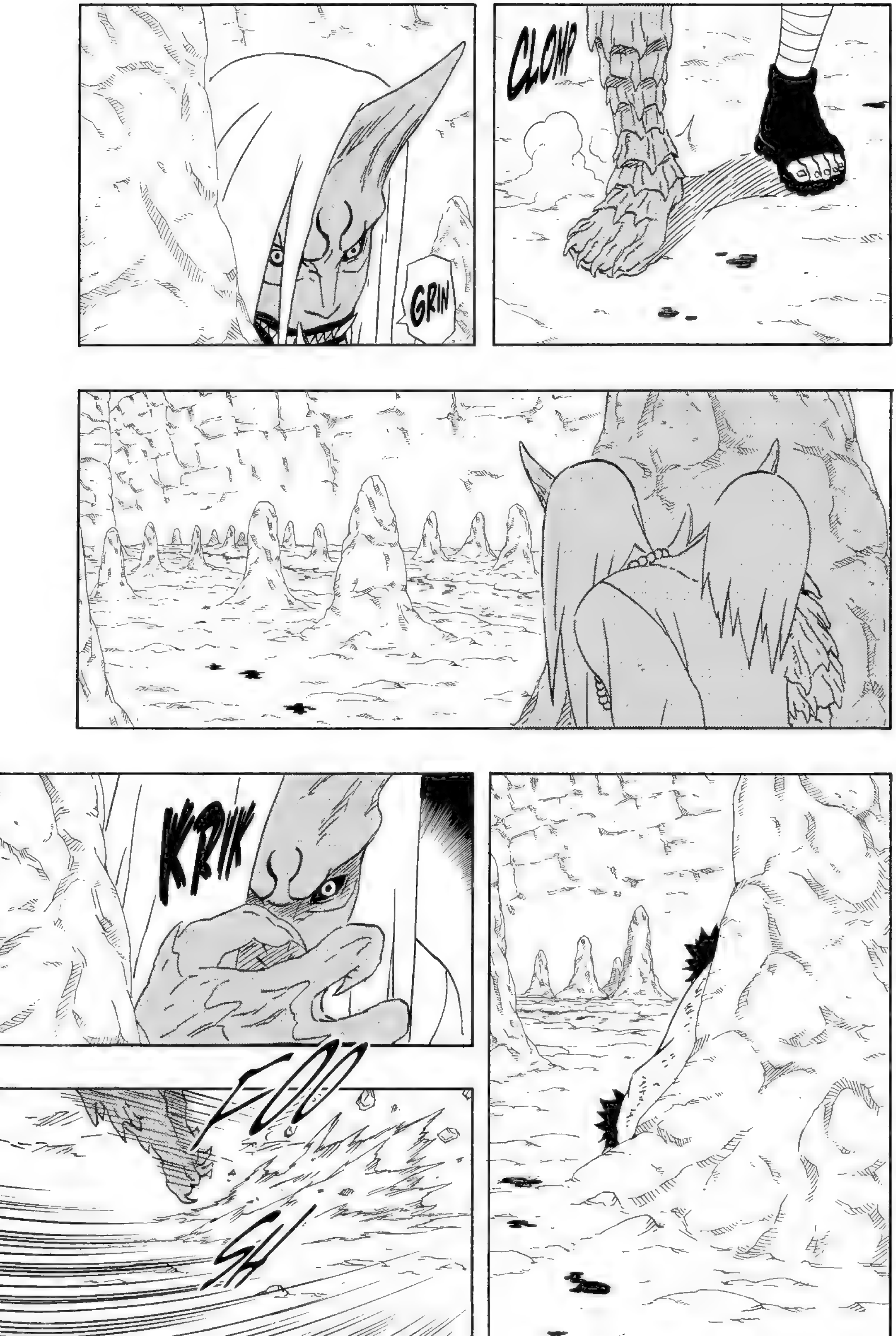

LITTLE BY LITTLE, THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER...
...
UH-OH... BLOODSTAINS...
PLIT
PLIT

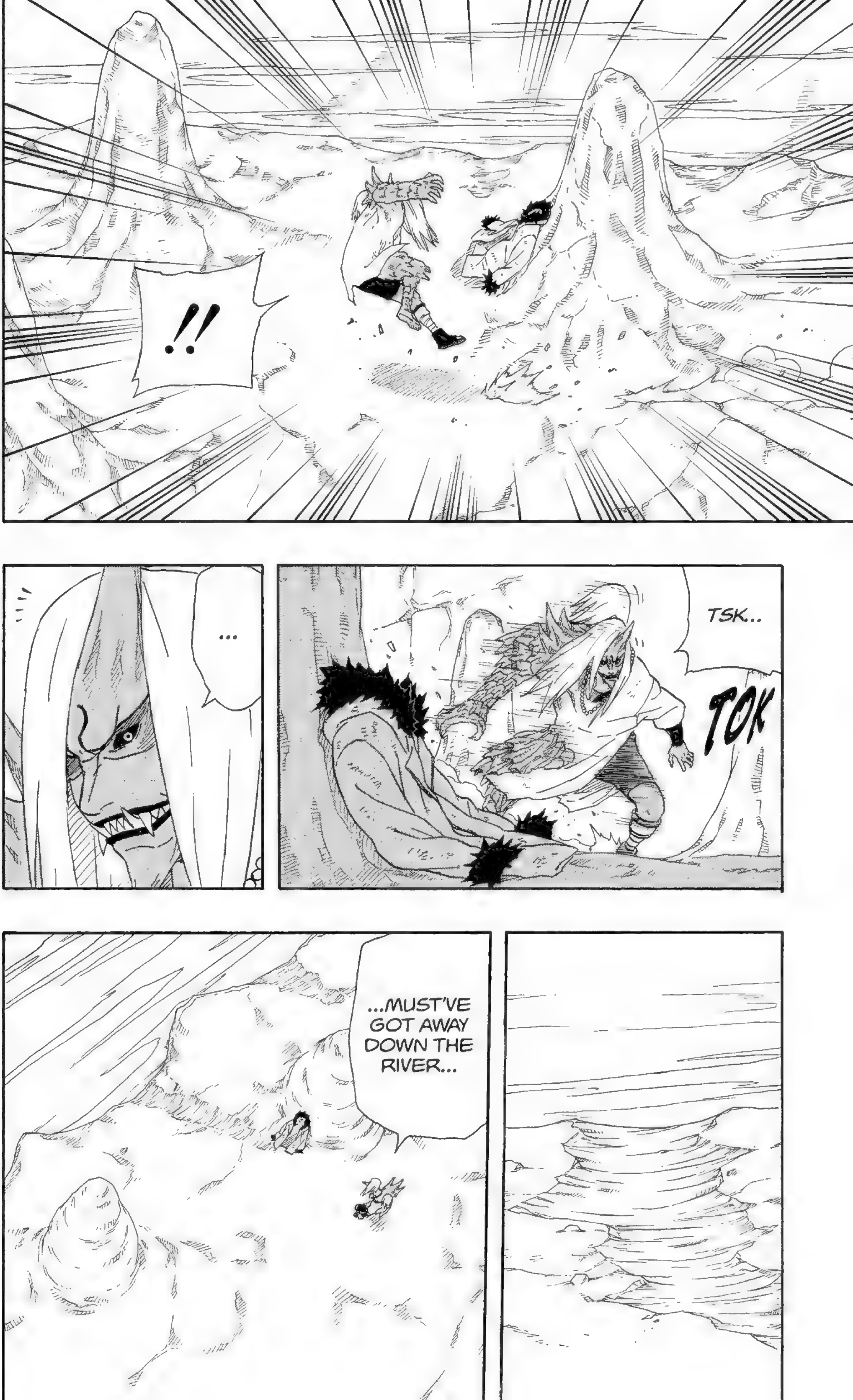
READ THIS WAY


SHAAA
RATS... I RESCUED AKAMARU, BUT...
I MIGHT'VE PUSHED IT A LITTLE TOO MUCH... HEH HEH...
OW...
SIGH...
?!!
SNIF SNIF
THAT SMELL... WHAT'S GOING ON?!
WHY...? WHY ARE THEY COMING THIS WAY...?!

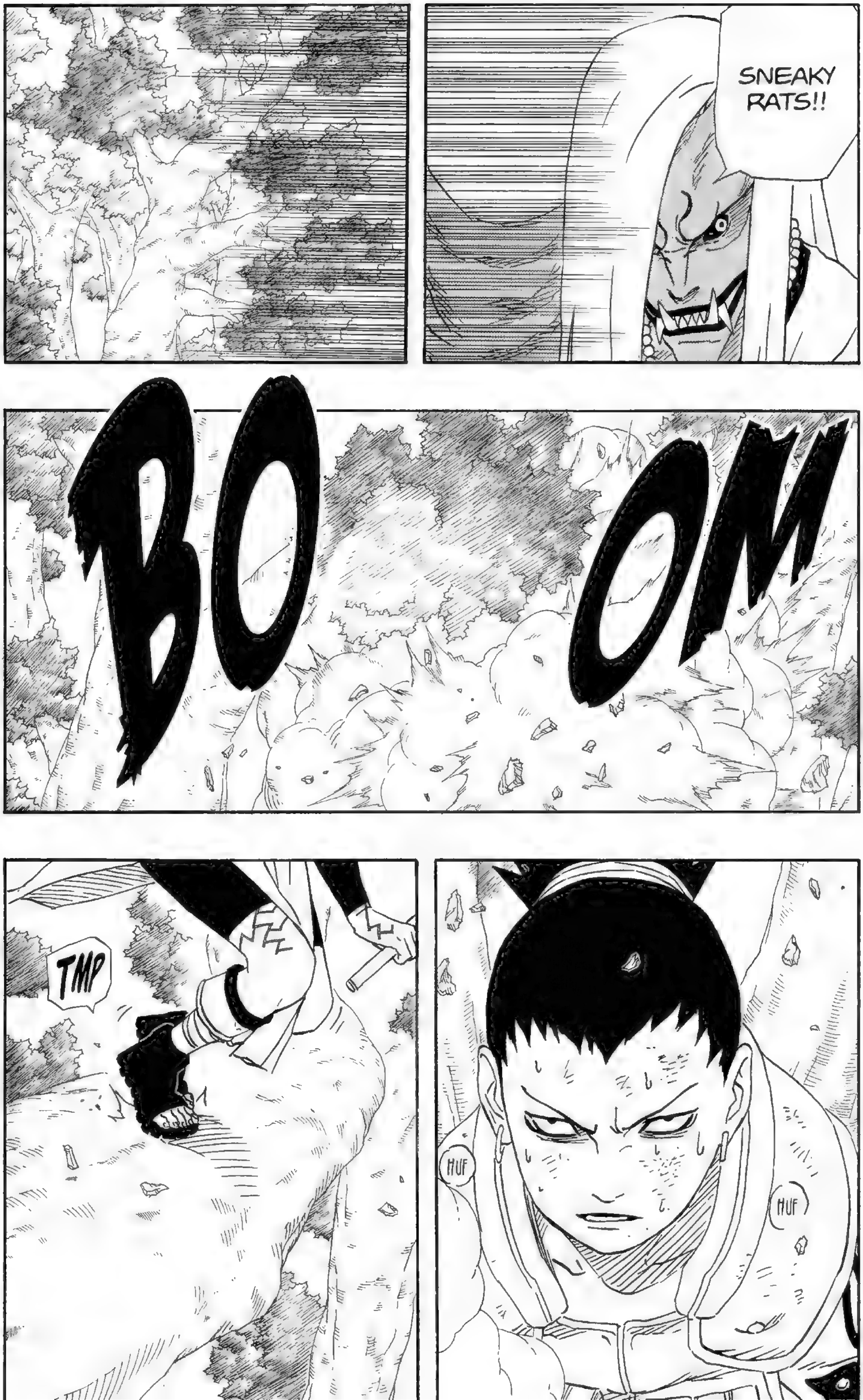

MAN... IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE...
SKF
ANYWAY, I GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE...
!!
ZING
UGH...
FWUMP
...
...NO GOOD... THE PAIN AND BLOOD LOSS ARE MAKING ME DIZZY. MY BODY... I CAN'T MOVE...
HUF
HUF
...AKAMARU...

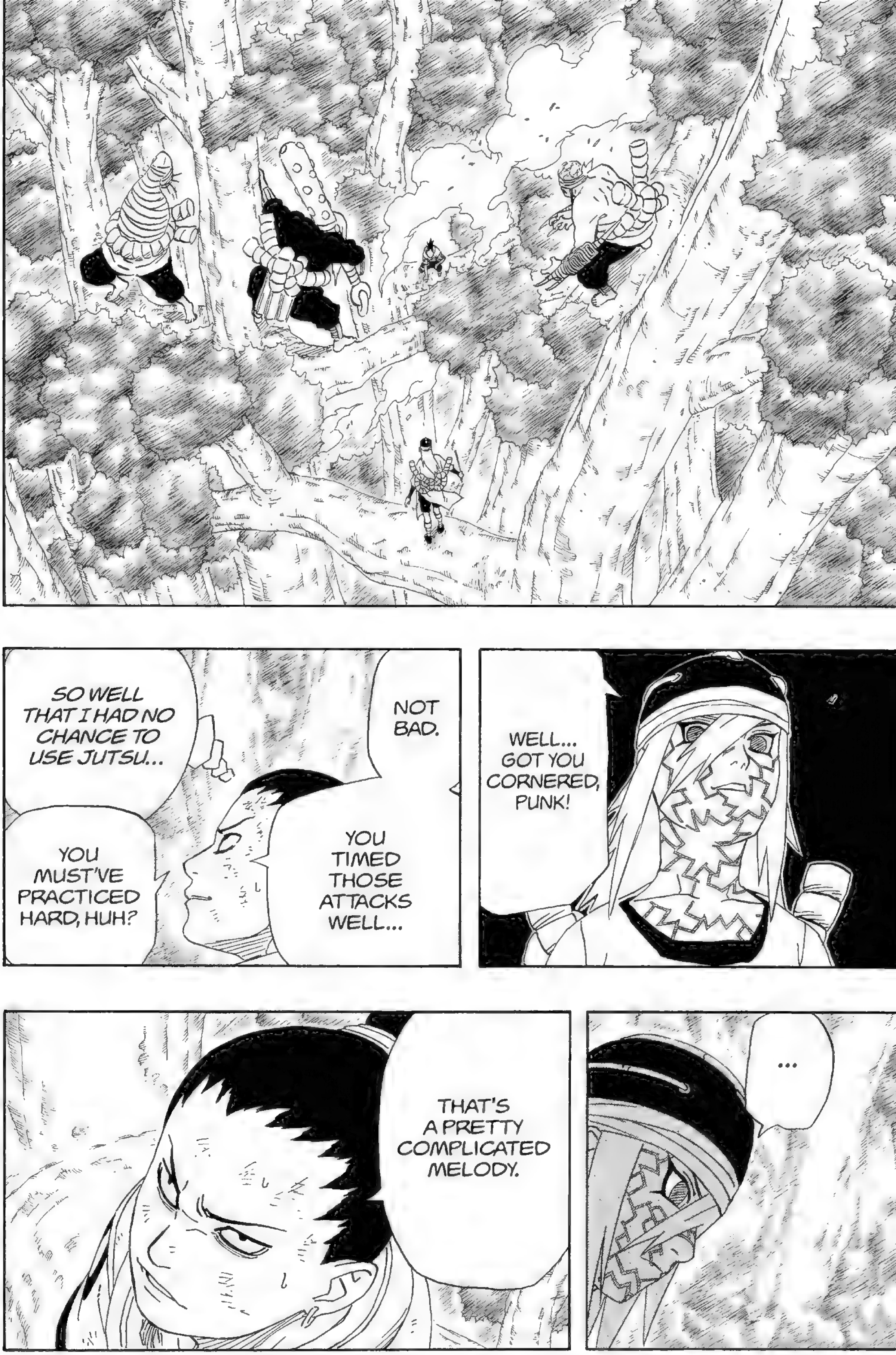
READ THIS WAY

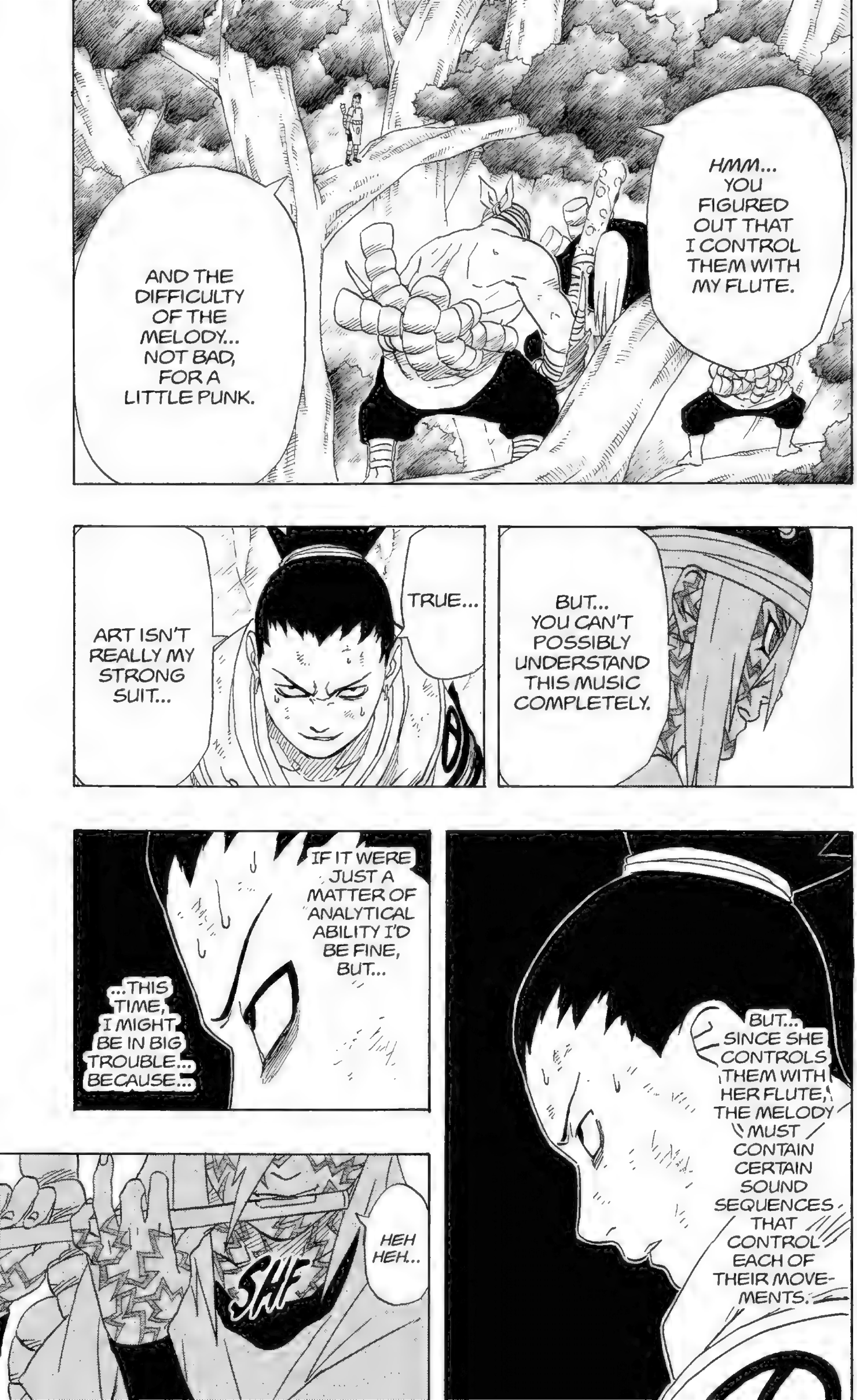

CLOMP
GRIN
KRIK
FOOSH

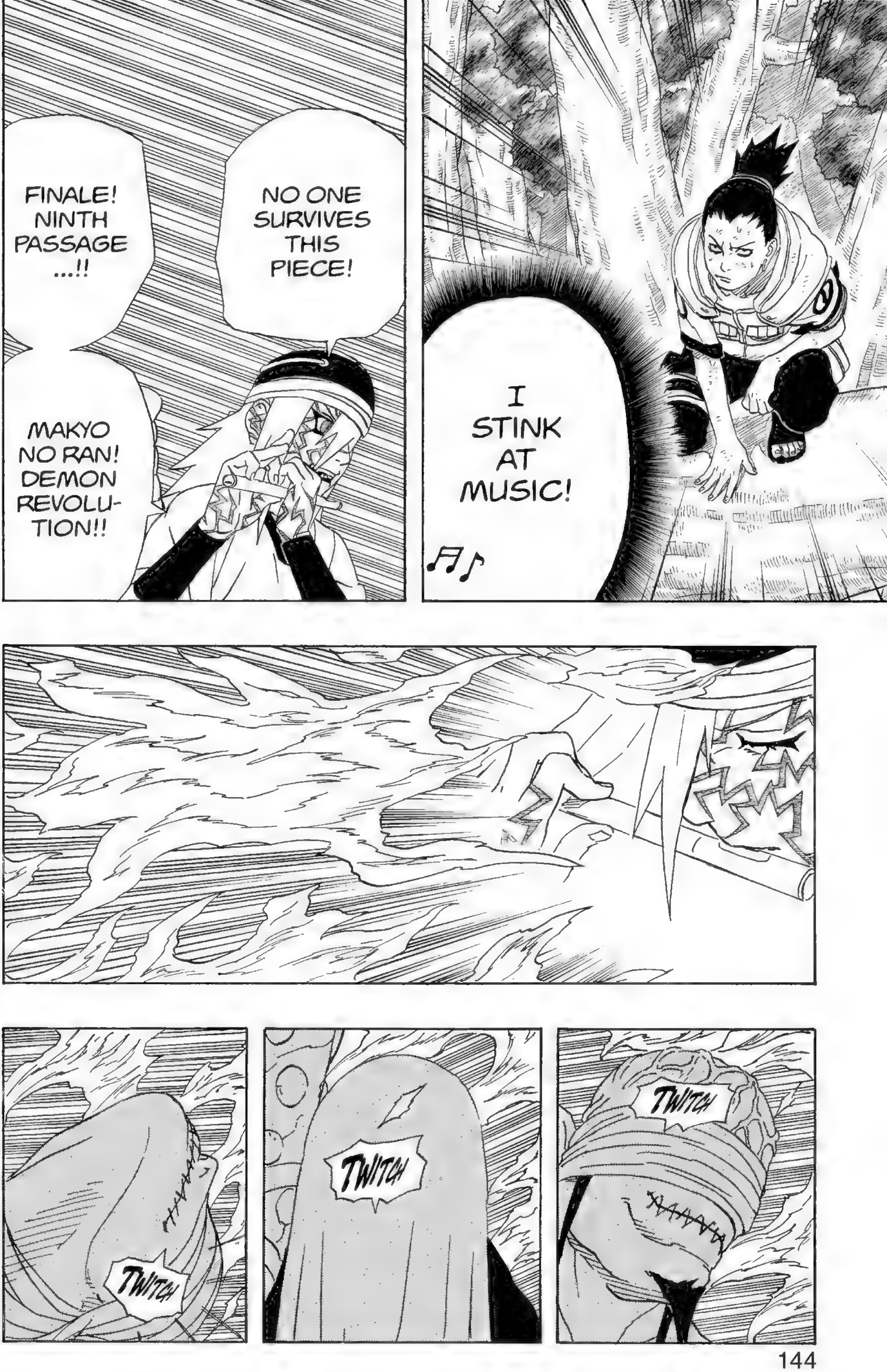

!!
TSK...
TOK
...
...MUST'VE GOT AWAY DOWN THE RIVER...

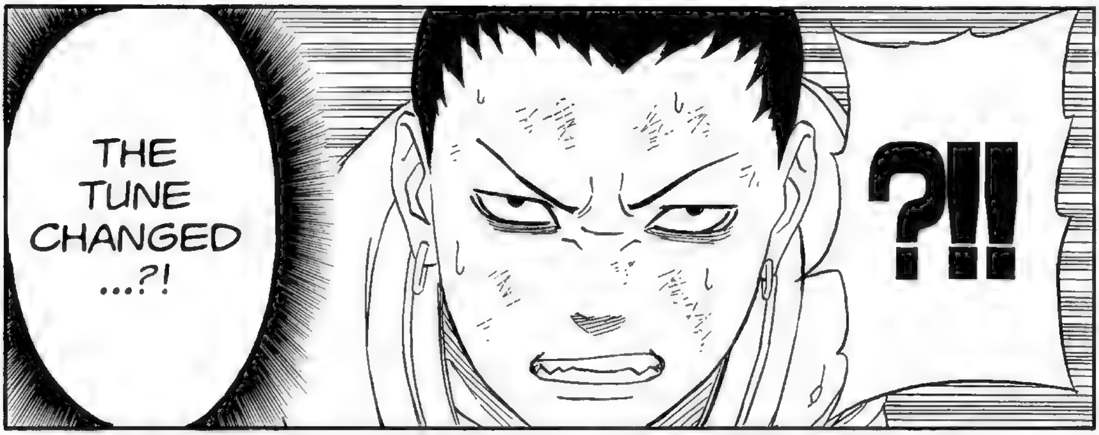
READ THIS WAY

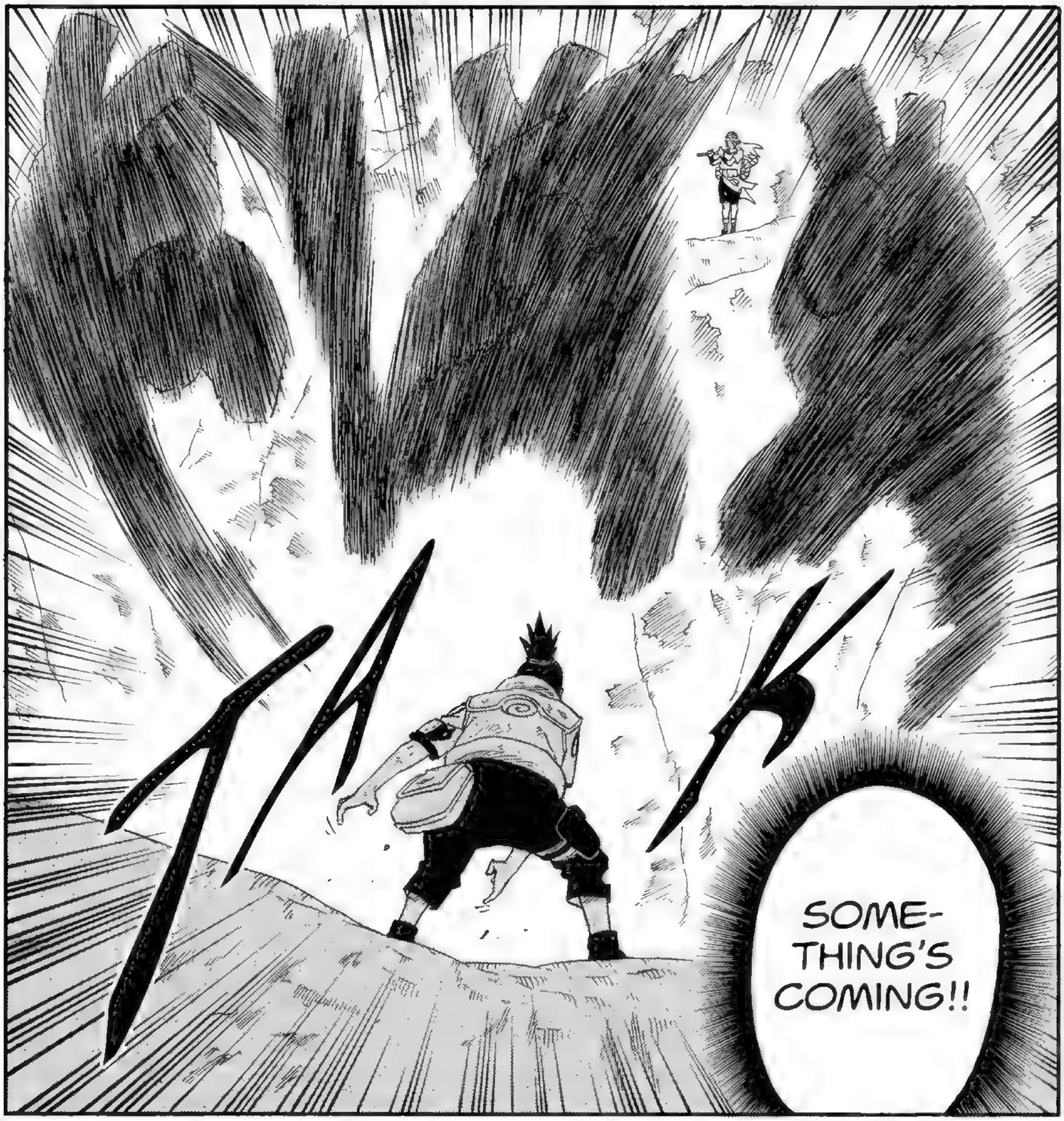

SNEAKY RATS!!
BOOM
HUF
HUF
TMP


WELL... GOT YOU CORNERED, PUNK!
NOT BAD.
YOU TIMED THOSE ATTACKS WELL...
SO WELL THAT I HAD NO CHANCE TO USE JUTSU...
YOU MUST'VE PRACTICED HARD, HUH?
...
THAT'S A PRETTY COMPLICATED MELODY.


HMM... YOU FIGURED OUT THAT I CONTROL THEM WITH MY FLUTE.
AND THE DIFFICULTY OF THE MELODY... NOT BAD, FOR A LITTLE PUNK.
BUT... YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND THIS MUSIC COMPLETELY.
TRUE...
ART ISN'T REALLY MY STRONG SUIT...
BUT... SINCE SHE CONTROLS THEM WITH HER FLUTE, THE MELODY MUST CONTAIN CERTAIN SOUND SEQUENCES THAT CONTROL EACH OF THEIR MOVEMENTS.
IF IT WERE JUST A MATTER OF ANALYTICAL ABILITY I'D BE FINE, BUT...
...THIS TIME, I MIGHT BE IN BIG TROUBLE... BECAUSE...
HEH HEH...
SHF


I STINK AT MUSIC!
♫♪
NO ONE SURVIVES THIS PIECE!
FINALE! NINTH PASSAGE ...!!
MAKYO NO RAN! DEMON REVOLUTION!!
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH


?!!
THE TUNE CHANGED ...?!


TAK
SOMETHING'S COMING!!

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY: A STORY TOO EMBARRASSING TO WRITE DOWN, PART 1

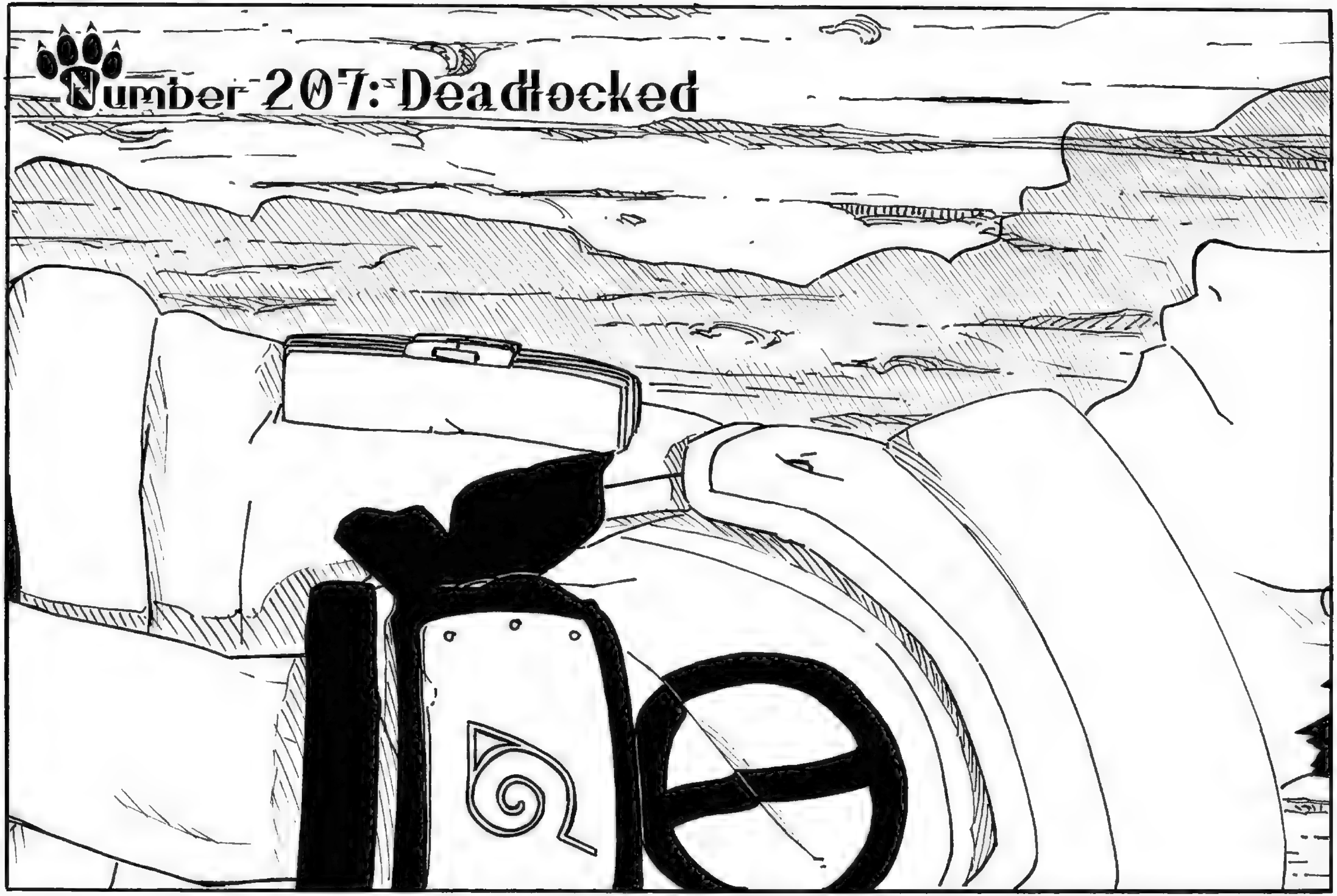
IT'S ABOUT TIME I ENDED WRITING MY PERSONAL HISTORY, BUT I'VE GOT NOTHING TO FILL OUT THIS BLANK PAGE WITH, SO I DECIDED TO CONTINUE WRITING A LITTLE BIT MORE. IT SEEMS THE MORE I WRITE, THE MORE I EMBARRASS MYSELF... BUT, I'M GOING TO WRITE AGAIN ANYWAY, AGAINST MY BETTER JUDGMENT. FIRST OF ALL, THIS STORY IS SO POINTLESS AND SILLY THAT I'VE AVOIDED WRITING IT UNTIL NOW, AND I'M NOT REALLY GUNG-HO ON WRITING IT NOW EITHER. BUT, AGAINST... MY...BETTER...JUDGMENT...

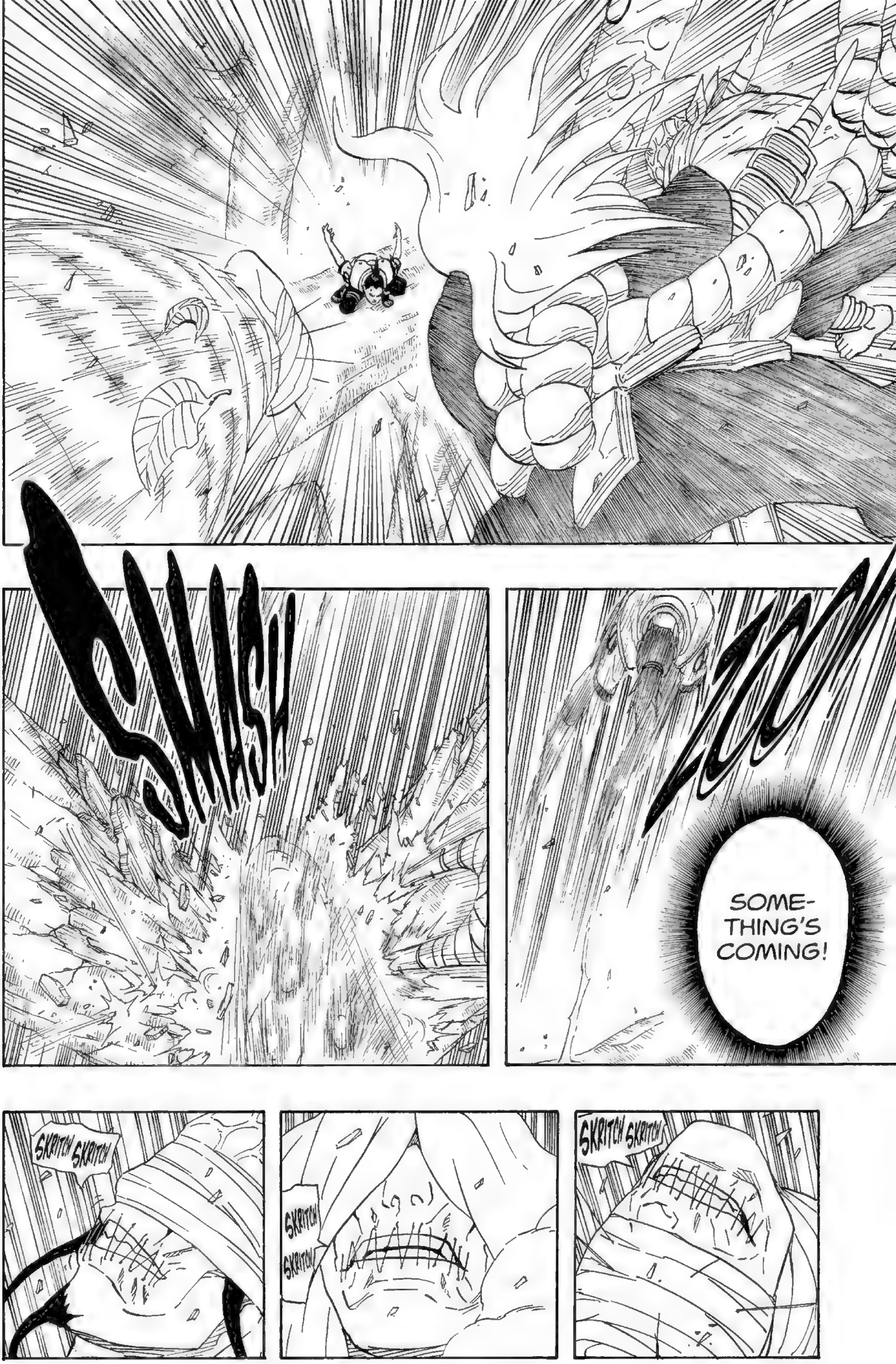
I THINK IT WAS WHEN I WAS IN THE FIRST GRADE. I WAS SO INTO THIS ONE SENTAI, SFX ACTION/ADVENTURE HERO SERIES. THE ONE I PLAYED MOST OFTEN AT THAT AGE WAS *TAIYO SENTAI SAN BARUKAN* (SOLAR SQUADRON SUN VULCAN). I USED TO PLAY SUN VULCAN FIGHTERS WITH MY FRIEND AND MY TWIN BROTHER A LOT. SUN VULCAN WAS A BIT DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER SENTAI SERIES. WHILE MOST SENTAI SERIES HEROES WERE MADE UP OF A CELL OF FIVE, SUN VULCAN WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO SAVE THE EARTH WITH A CELL OF THREE. THE CELL CONSISTED OF VULEAGLE, VULSHARK AND VULPANTHER.

I'VE NEVER LIKED BEING THE LEADER, EVER SINCE I WAS A KID. SO I DECIDED TO PLAY THE ROLES OF EITHER VULSHARK OR VULPANTHER, THE SECOND OR THIRD RANKED GUYS. BUT, BECAUSE VULSHARK'S POSE LOOKED LAME TO ME, EVEN AT THAT AGE, I DECIDED TO GO WITH VULPANTHER. ...ANYWAY... WELL... *UMM*... I REALLY GOT INTO THE VULPANTHER CHARACTER. OR, IT WAS MORE LIKE... I ALREADY WAS VULPANTHER. BASICALLY, I WAS INTOXICATED WITH VULPANTHER. HOW MUCH SO...? TO BE CONTINUED...

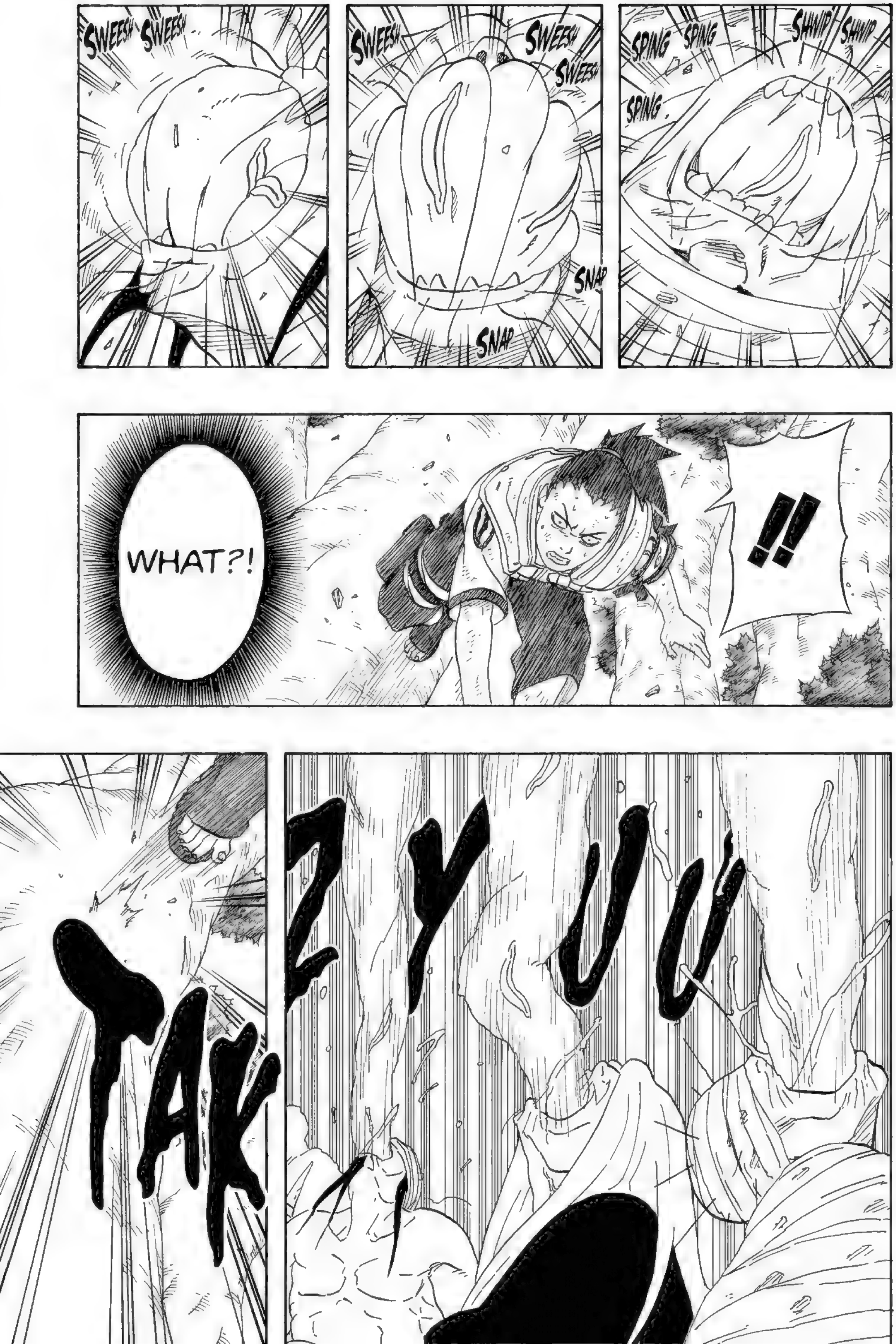
P.S. THE TRUTH SHALL BE REVEALED!

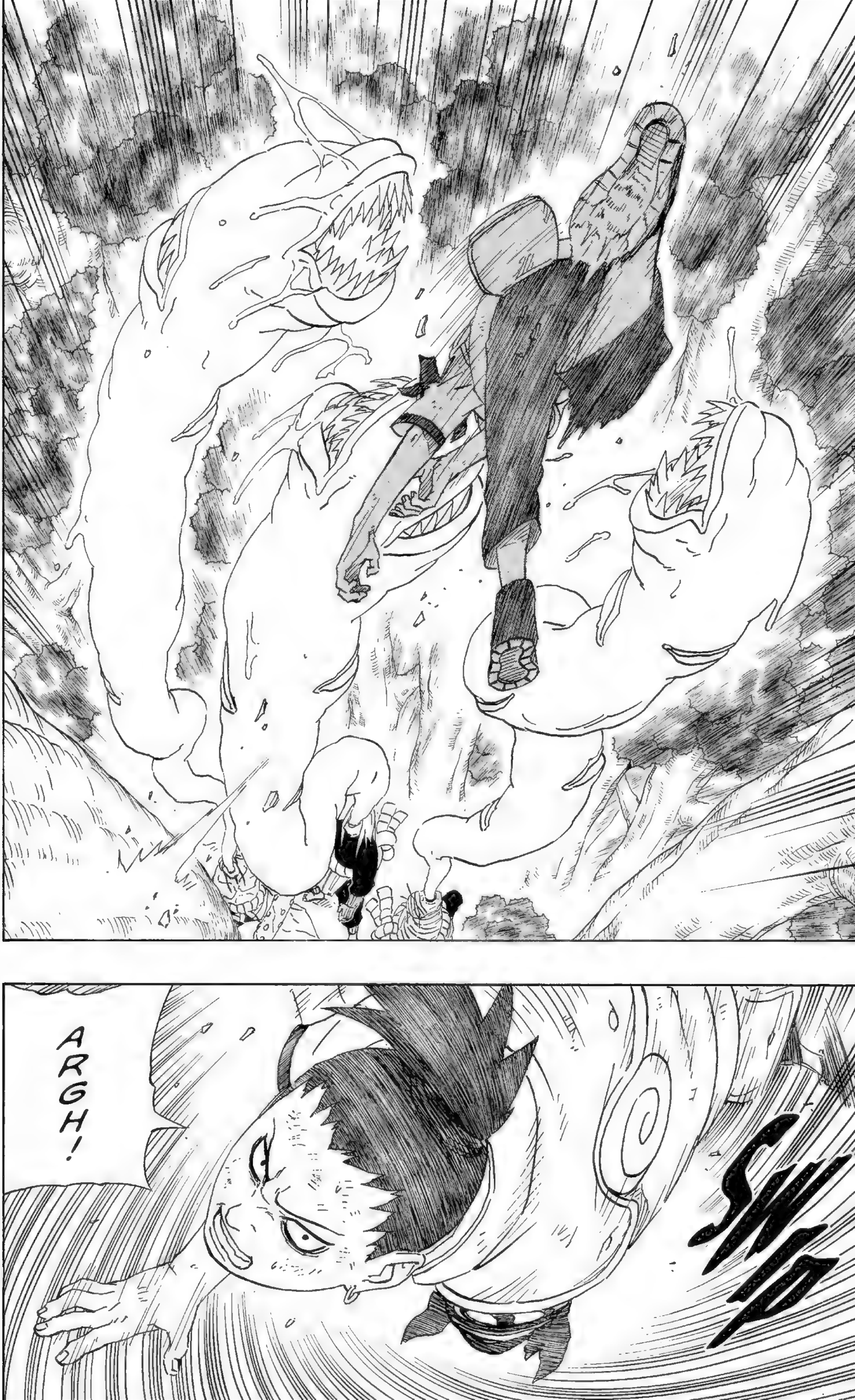
Number 207: Deadlocked

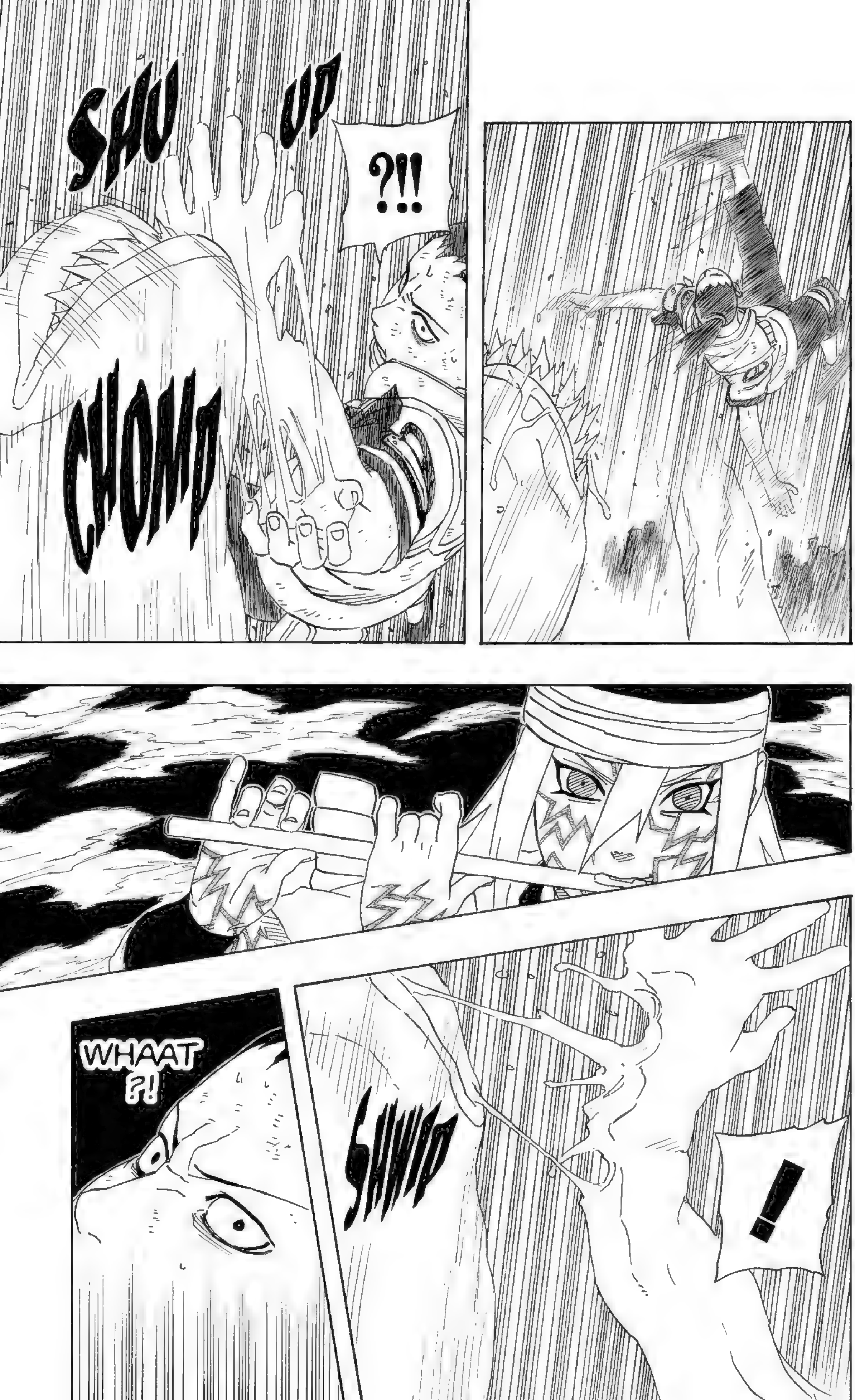


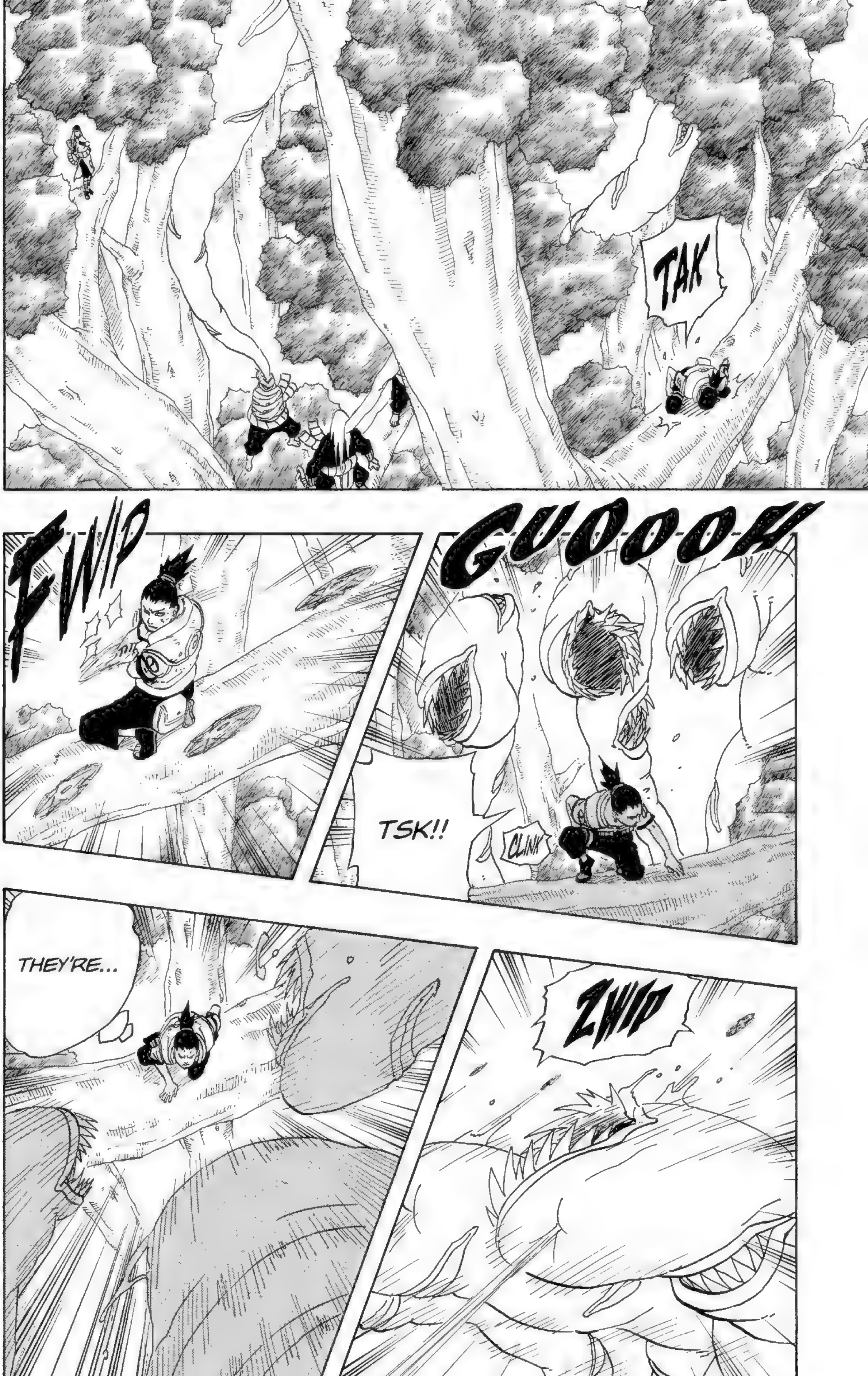

ZOO
SOME-THING'S COMING!
SMASH
SKRITCH SKRITCH
SKRITCH SKRITCH
SKRITCH SKRITCH

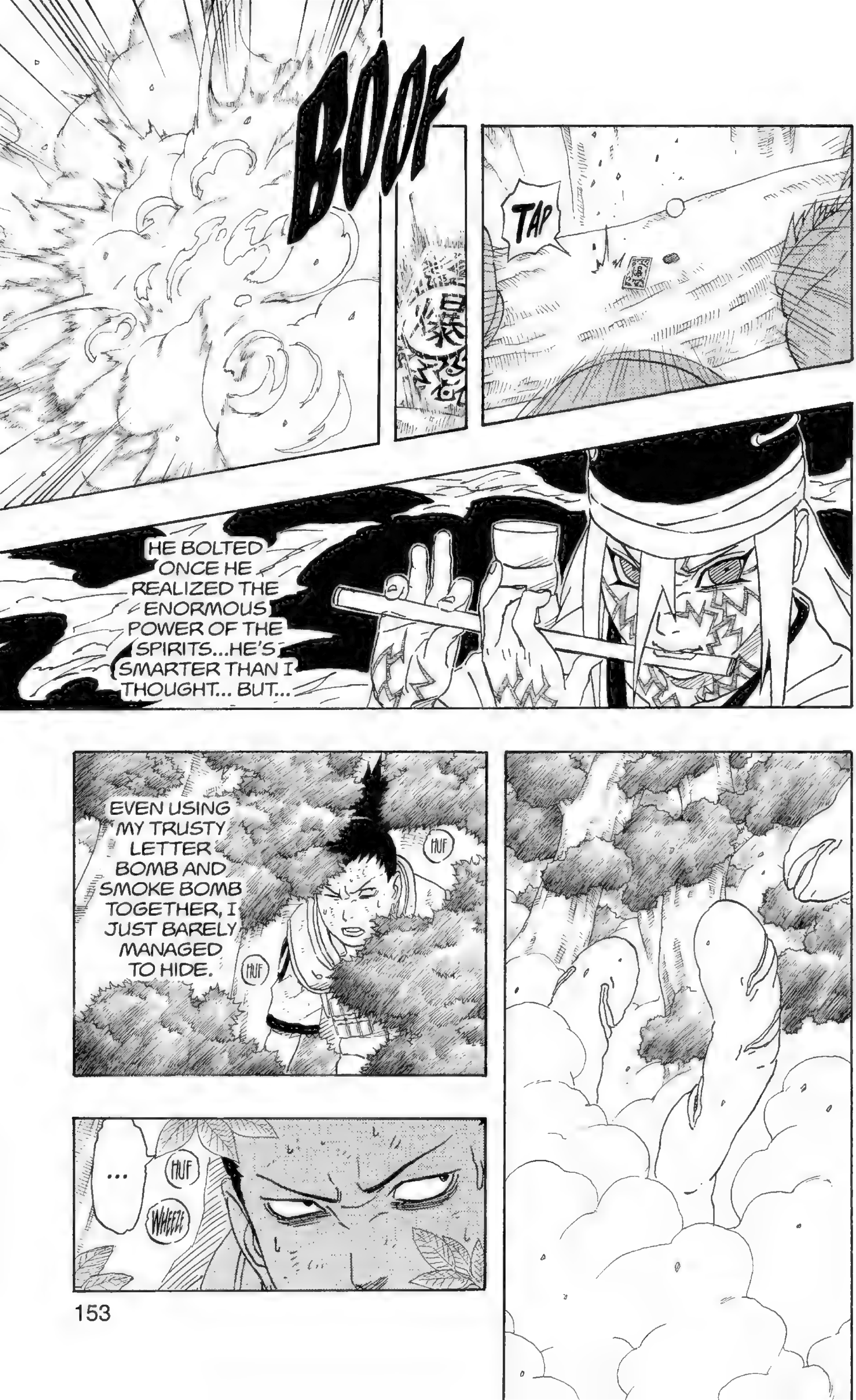
READ THIS WAY

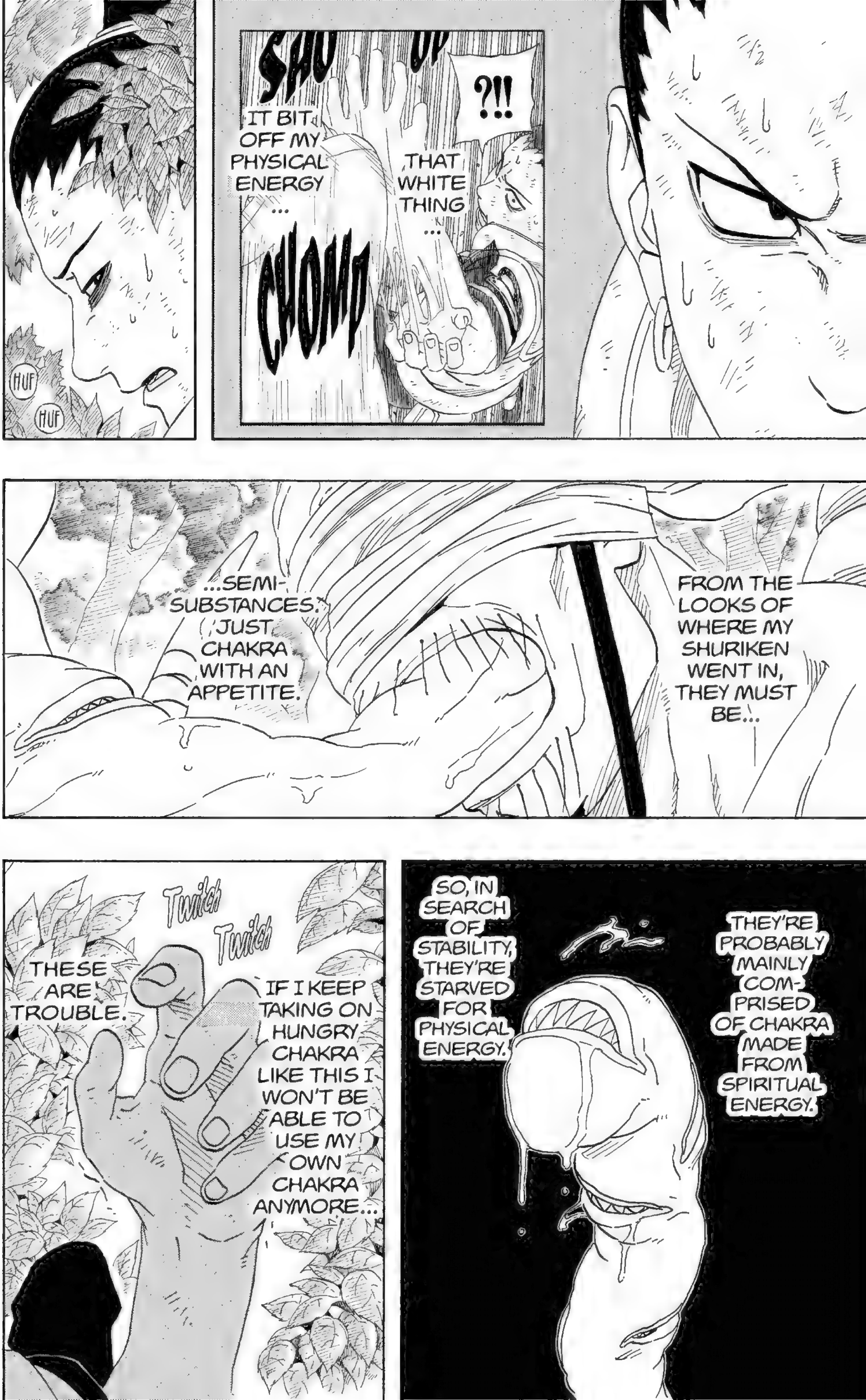

SHWIP SHWIP
SPING SPING
SPING
SWEESH
SWEESH
SWEESH
SNAP
SNAP
SWEESH SWEESH
!!
WHAT?!
ZYUU
TAK

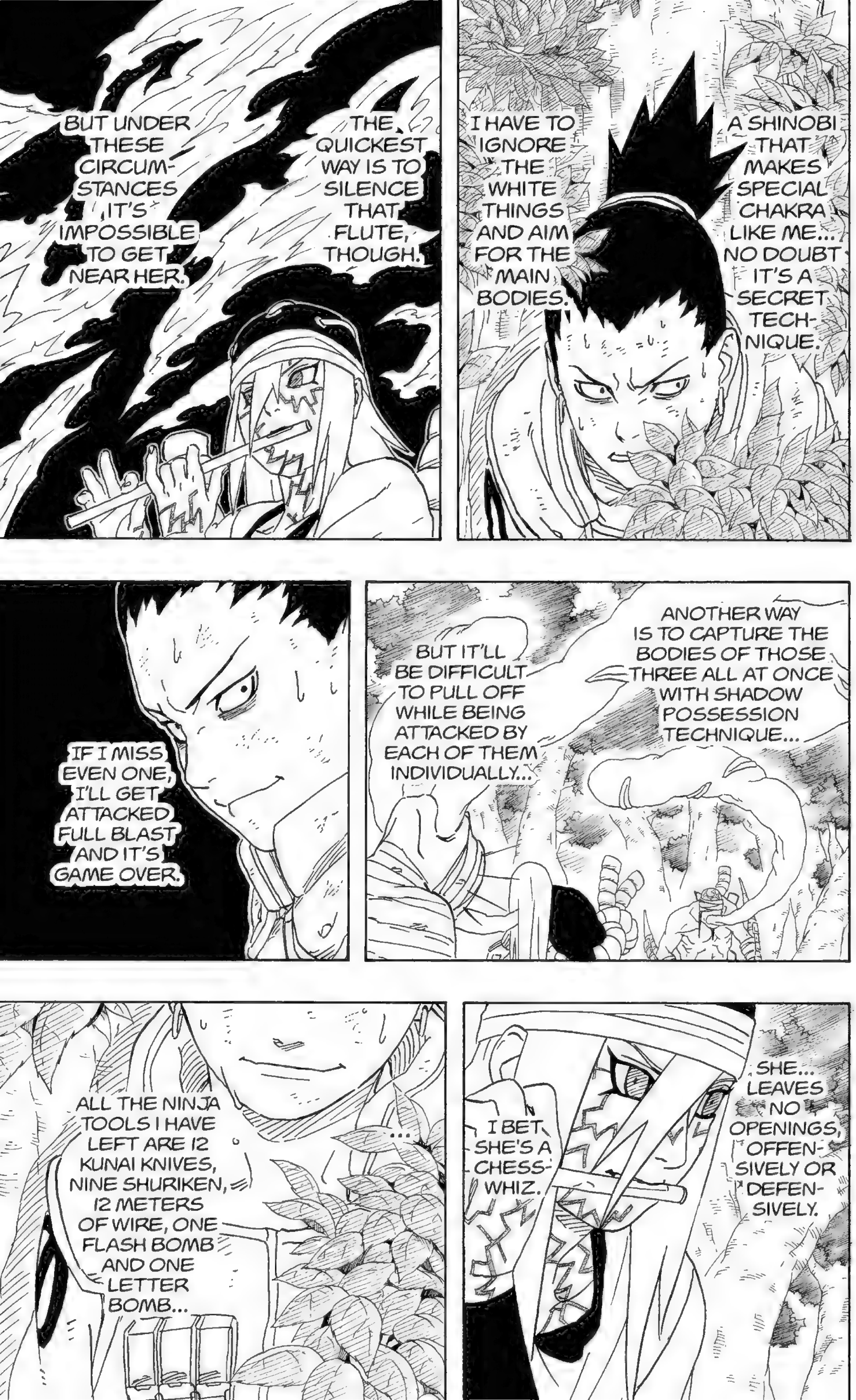

ARGH!
SWIP

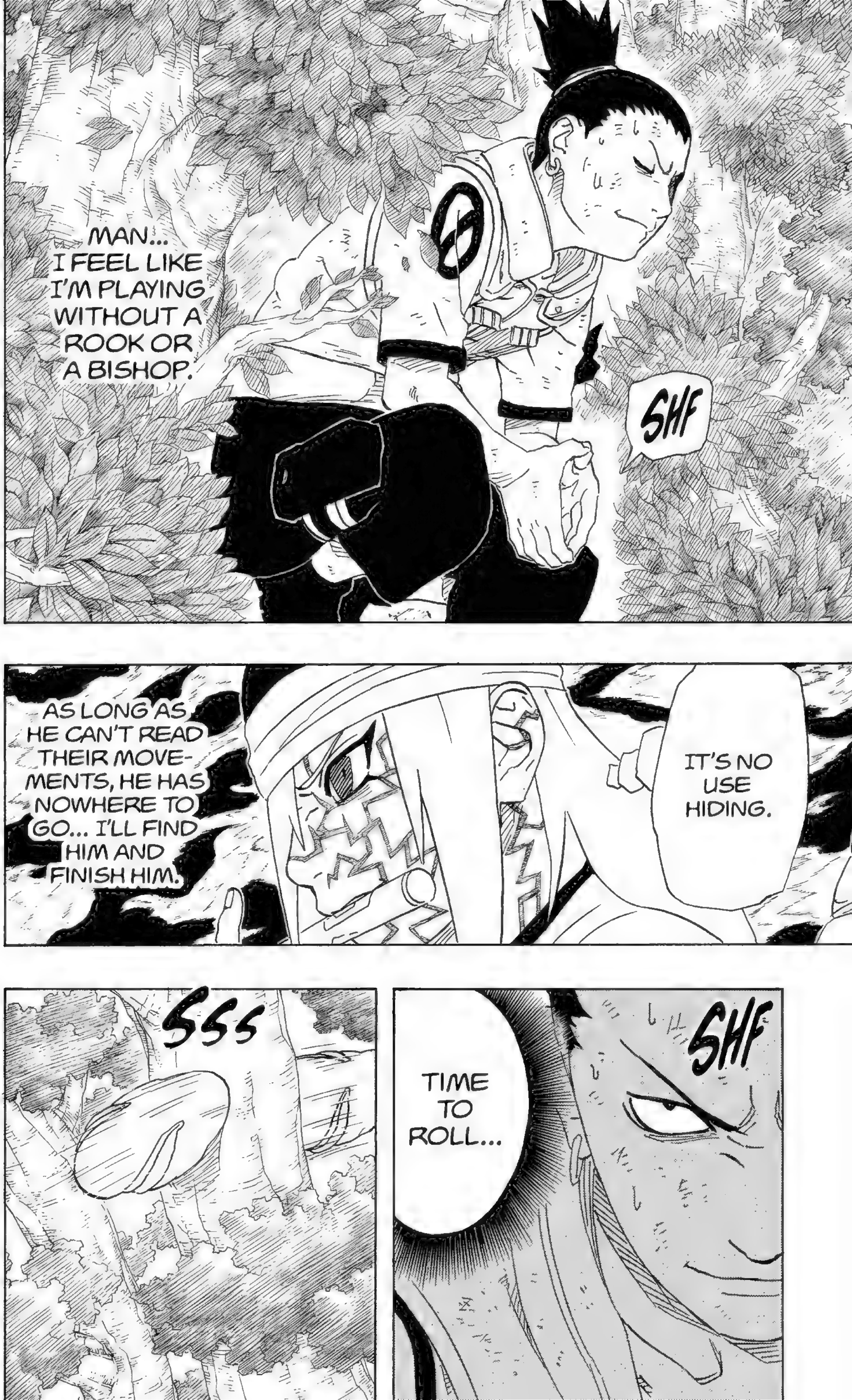

SHU UP
?!!
CHOMP
SHWIP
!
WHAAT ?!

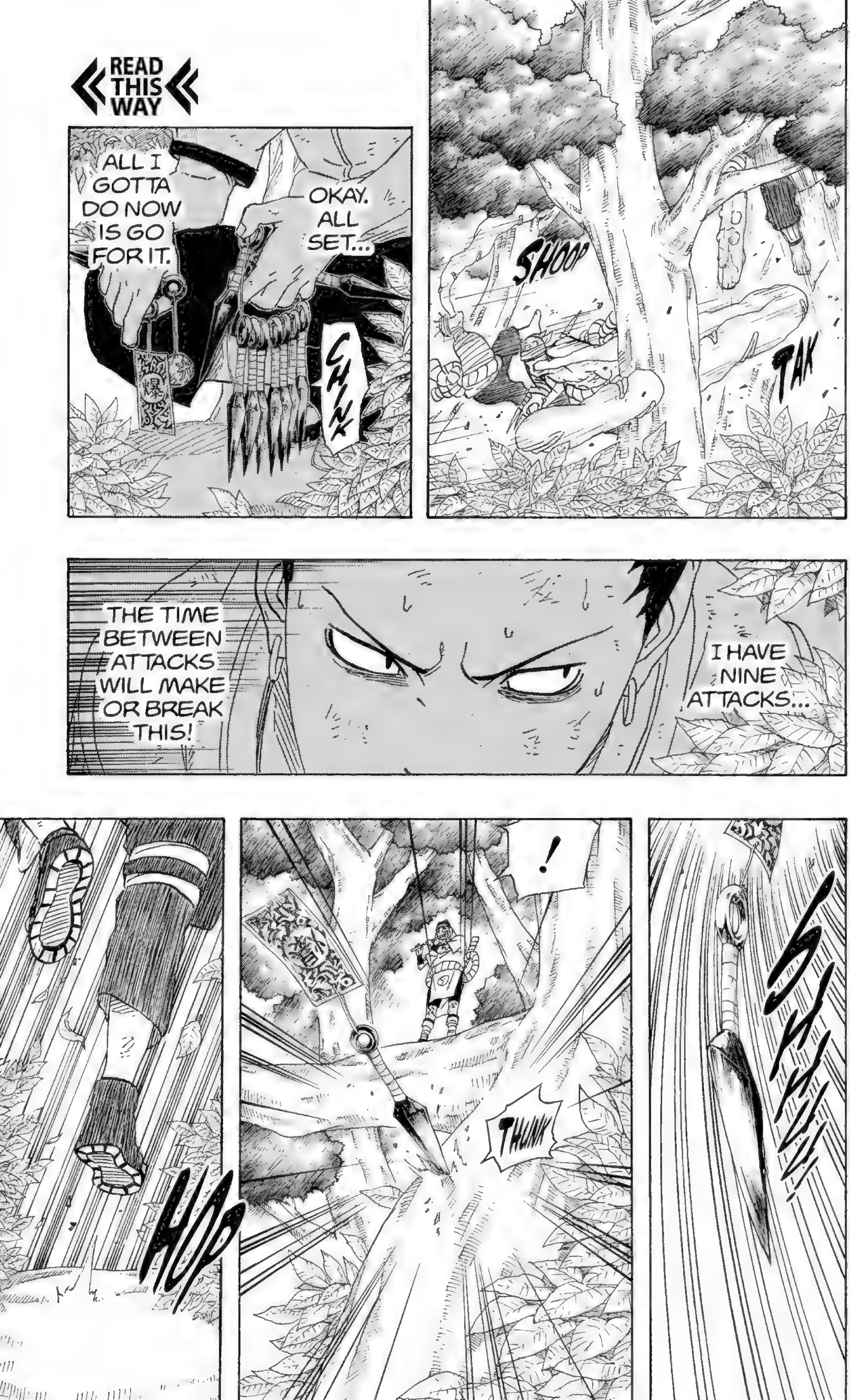

TAK
GUOOOOH
TSK!!
CLINK
FWIP
ZWIP
THEY'RE...


TAP
BOOF
HE BOLTED ONCE HE REALIZED THE ENORMOUS POWER OF THE SPIRITS...HE'S SMARTER THAN I THOUGHT... BUT...
EVEN USING MY TRUSTY LETTER BOMB AND SMOKE BOMB TOGETHER, I JUST BARELY MANAGED TO HIDE.
HUF
HUF
...
HUF
WHEEZE

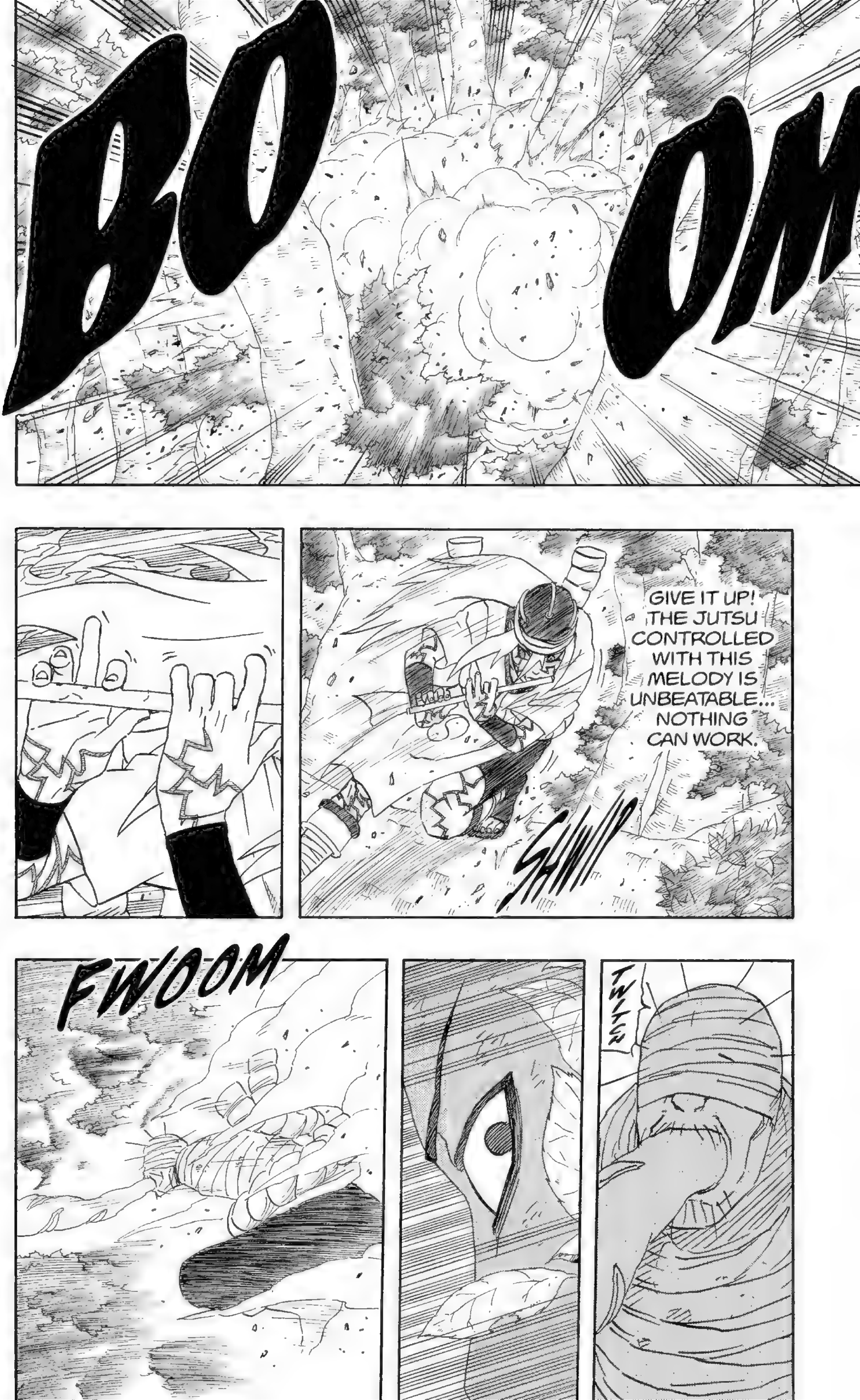

SHO UP
?!!
THAT WHITE THING...
IT BIT OFF MY PHYSICAL ENERGY...
CHOMP
HUF
HUF
FROM THE LOOKS OF WHERE MY SHURIKEN WENT IN, THEY MUST BE...
...SEMI-SUBSTANCES. JUST CHAKRA WITH AN APPETITE.
THEY'RE PROBABLY MAINLY COMPRISED OF CHAKRA MADE FROM SPIRITUAL ENERGY.
SO, IN SEARCH OF STABILITY, THEY'RE STARVED FOR PHYSICAL ENERGY.
IF I KEEP TAKING ON HUNGRY CHAKRA LIKE THIS I WON'T BE ABLE TO USE MY OWN CHAKRA ANYMORE...
Twitch
Twitch
THESE ARE TROUBLE.

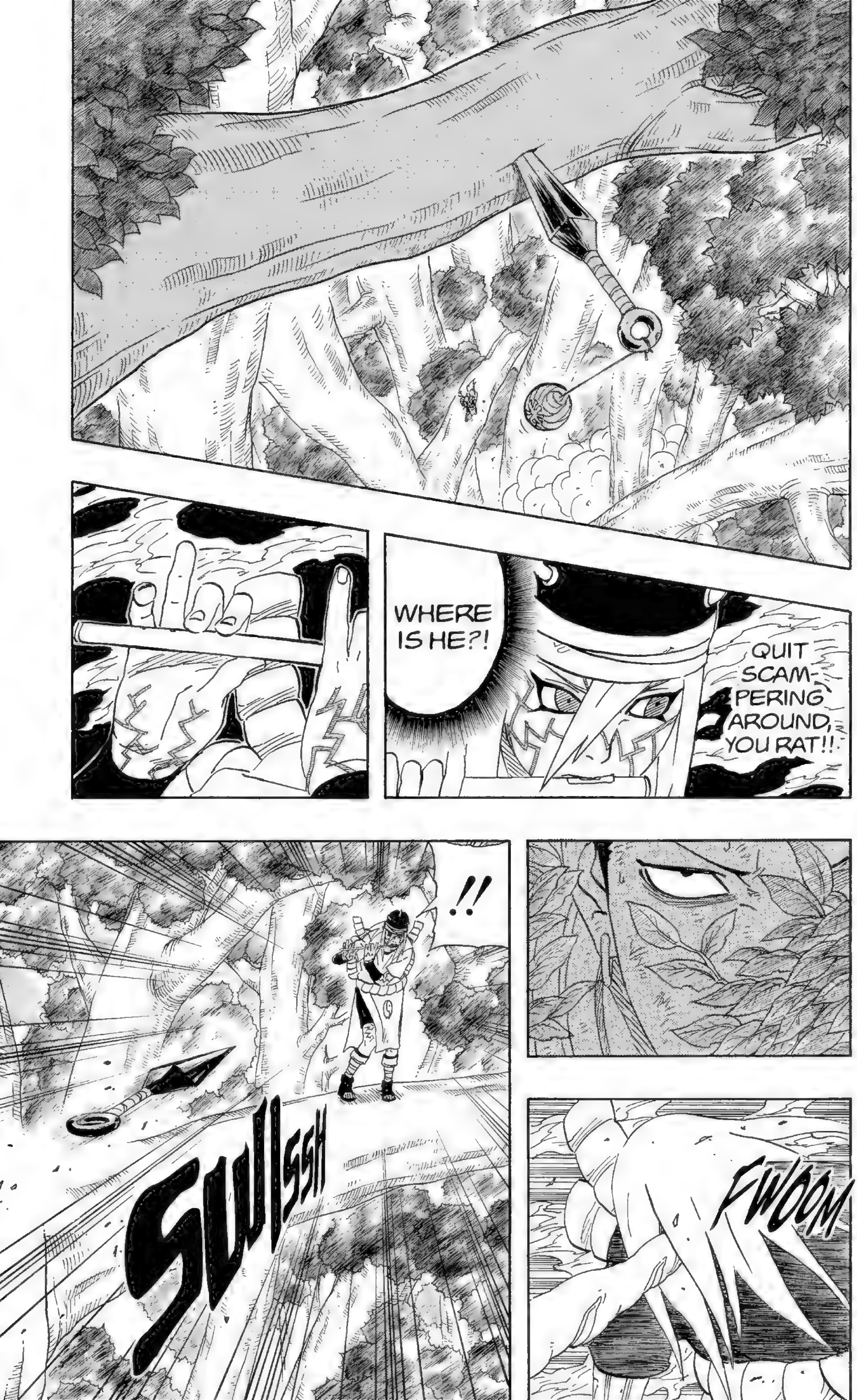

A SHINOBI THAT MAKES SPECIAL CHAKRA LIKE ME... NO DOUBT IT'S A SECRET TECHNIQUE.
I HAVE TO IGNORE THE WHITE THINGS AND AIM FOR THE MAIN BODIES.
THE QUICKEST WAY IS TO SILENCE THAT FLUTE, THOUGH.
BUT UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO GET NEAR HER.
ANOTHER WAY IS TO CAPTURE THE BODIES OF THOSE THREE ALL AT ONCE WITH SHADOW POSSESSION TECHNIQUE...
BUT IT'LL BE DIFFICULT TO PULL OFF WHILE BEING ATTACKED BY EACH OF THEM INDIVIDUALLY...
IF I MISS EVEN ONE, I'LL GET ATTACKED FULL BLAST AND IT'S GAME OVER.
SHE... LEAVES NO OPENINGS, OFFENSIVELY OR DEFENSIVELY.
I BET SHE'S A CHESS-WHIZ.
...
ALL THE NINJA TOOLS I HAVE LEFT ARE 12 KUNAI KNIVES, NINE SHURIKEN, 12 METERS OF WIRE, ONE FLASH BOMB AND ONE LETTER BOMB...

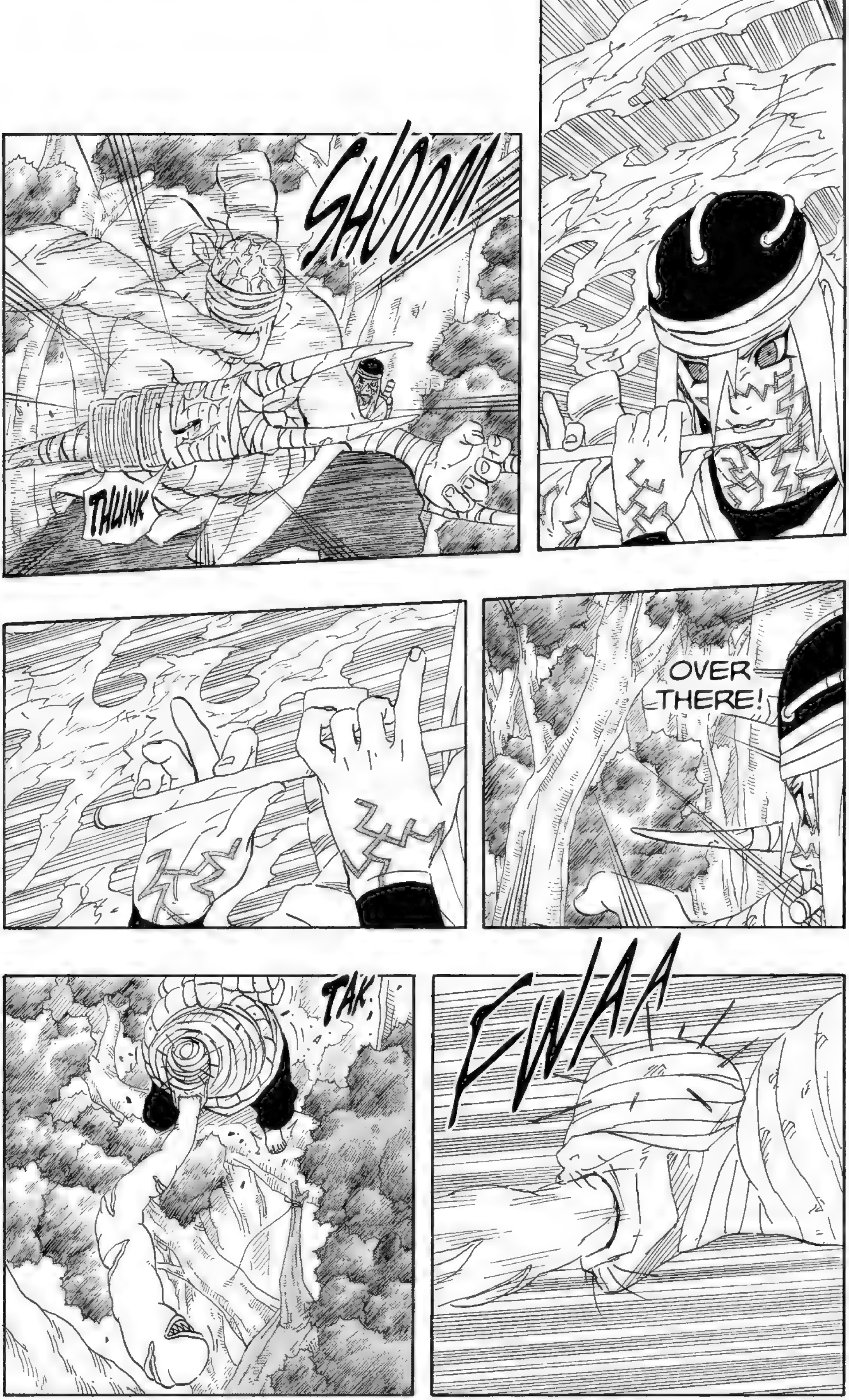

SHF
MAN... I FEEL LIKE I'M PLAYING WITHOUT A ROOK OR A BISHOP.
IT'S NO USE HIDING.
AS LONG AS HE CAN'T READ THEIR MOVEMENTS, HE HAS NOWHERE TO GO... I'LL FIND HIM AND FINISH HIM.
SHF
TIME TO ROLL...
SSS


READ THIS WAY

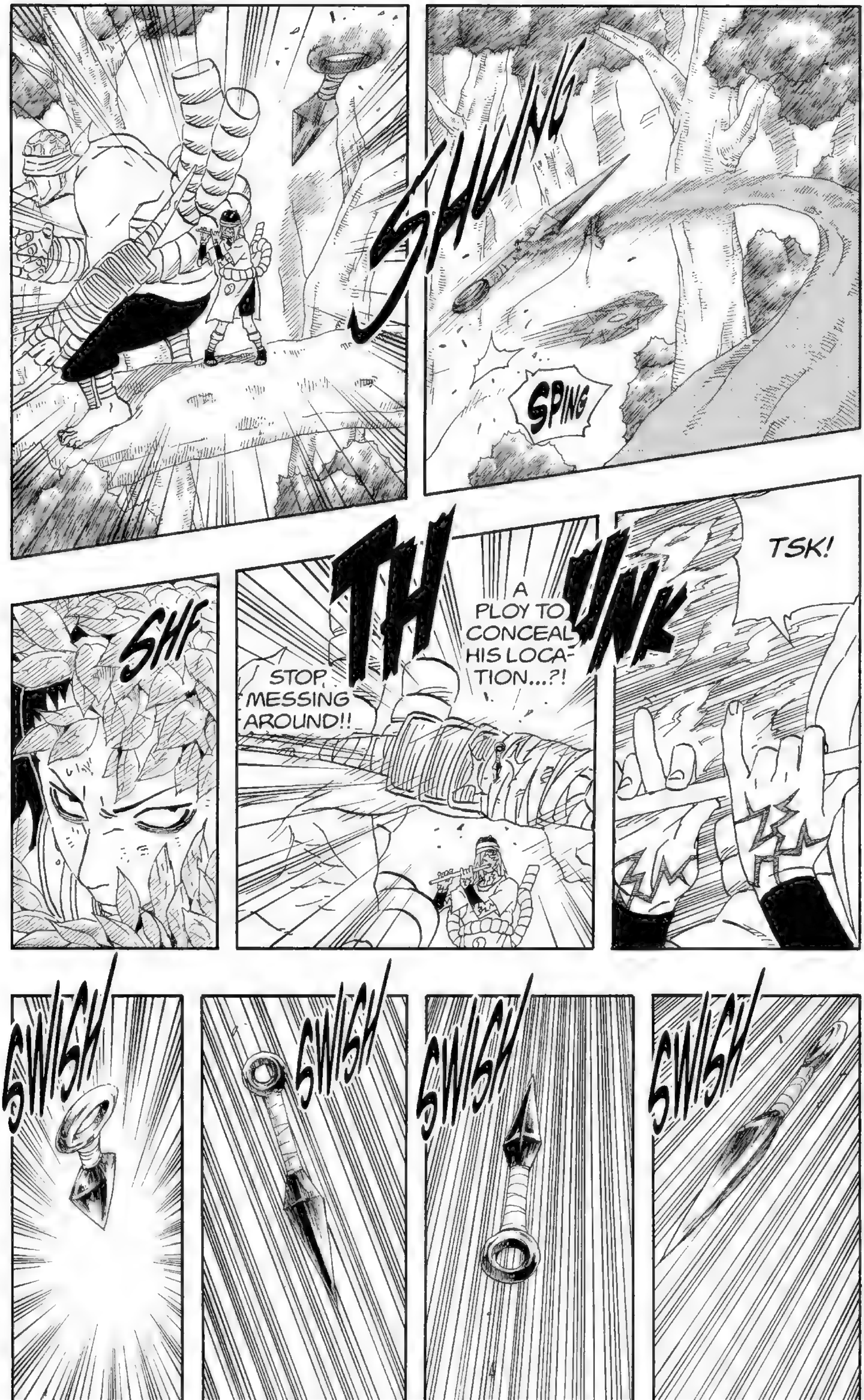
SHOOP
TAK
OKAY. ALL SET...
ALL I GOTTA DO NOW IS GO FOR IT.
CHINK
I HAVE NINE ATTACKS...
THE TIME BETWEEN ATTACKS WILL MAKE OR BREAK THIS!
SHHHH
!
THUNK
HOP

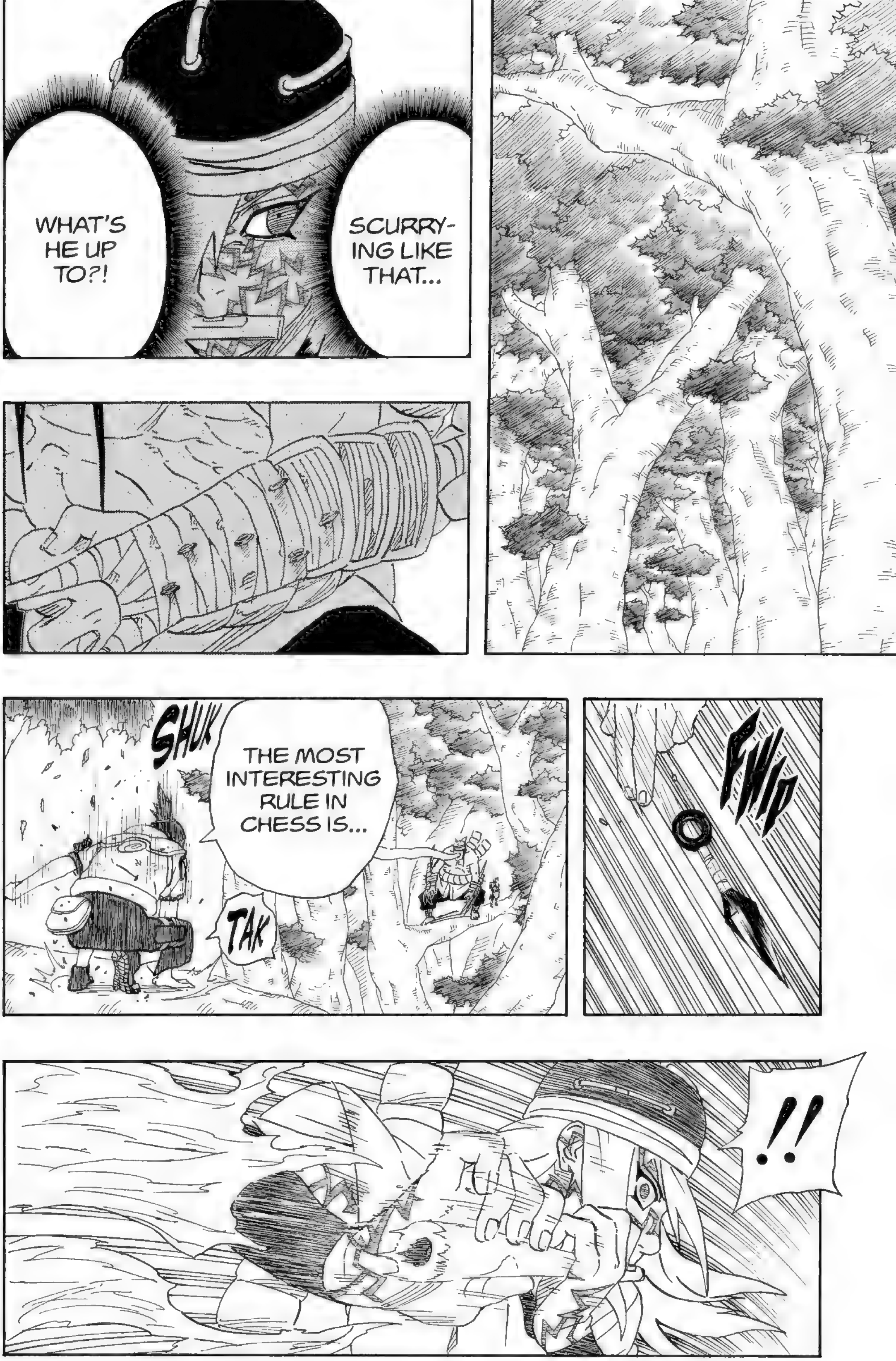

BOOM
GIVE IT UP! THE JUTSU CONTROLLED WITH THIS MELODY IS UNBEATABLE... NOTHING CAN WORK.
SHWIP
TWITCH
FWOOM

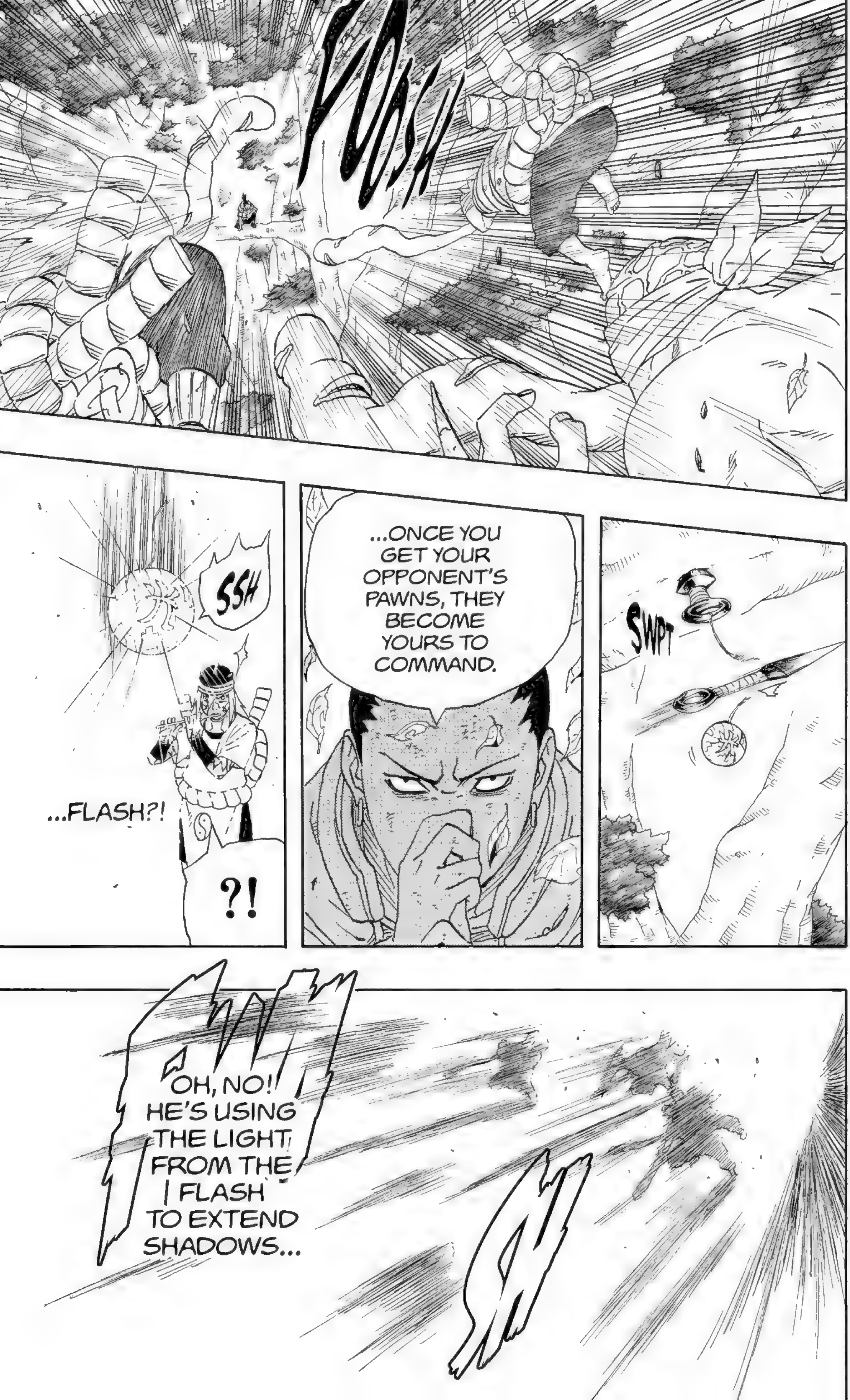

QUIT SCAMPERING AROUND, YOU RAT!!
WHERE IS HE?!
FWOOM
!!
SWISSH

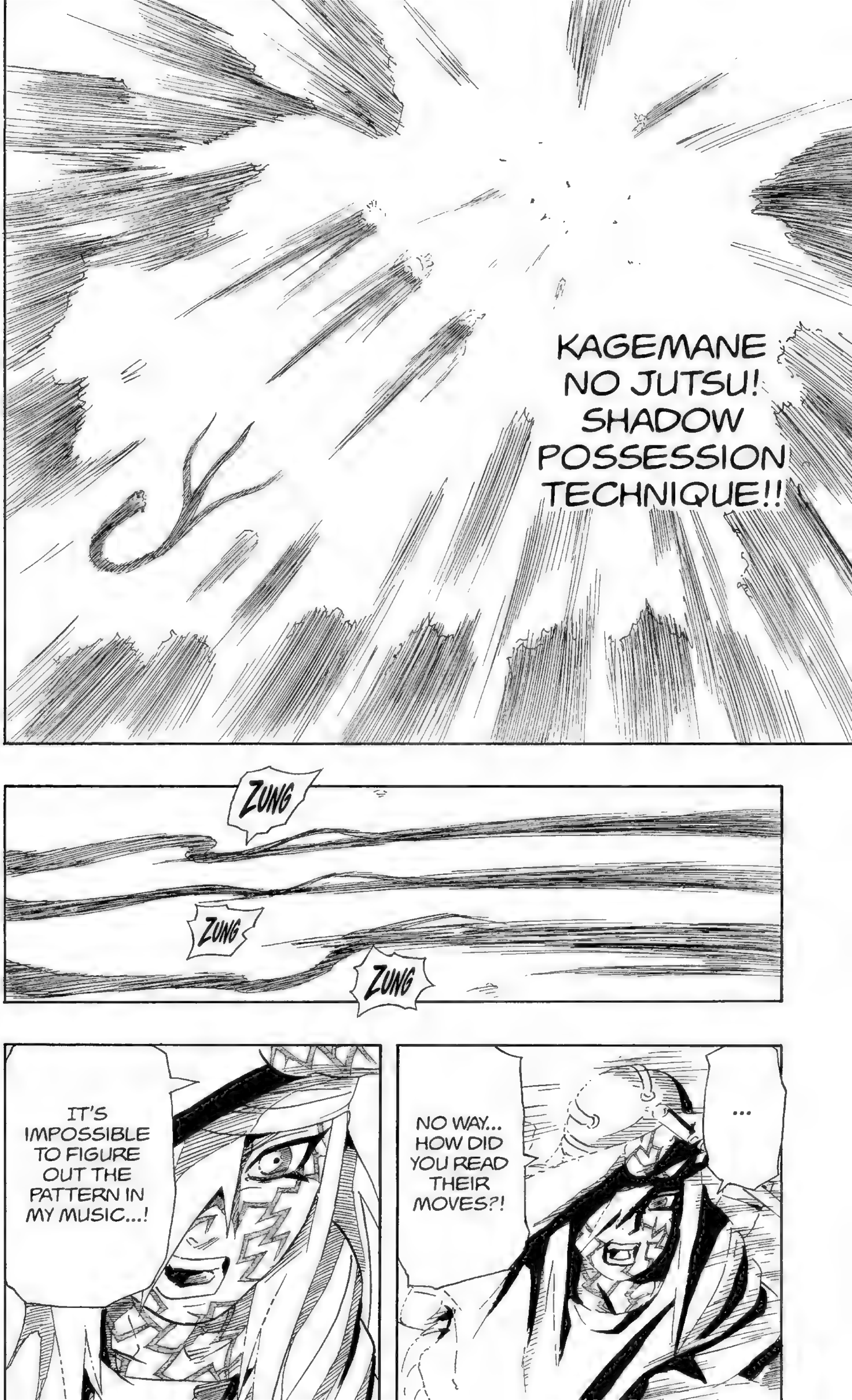

SHOOM
THUNK
OVER THERE!
FWAA
TAK

READ THIS WAY

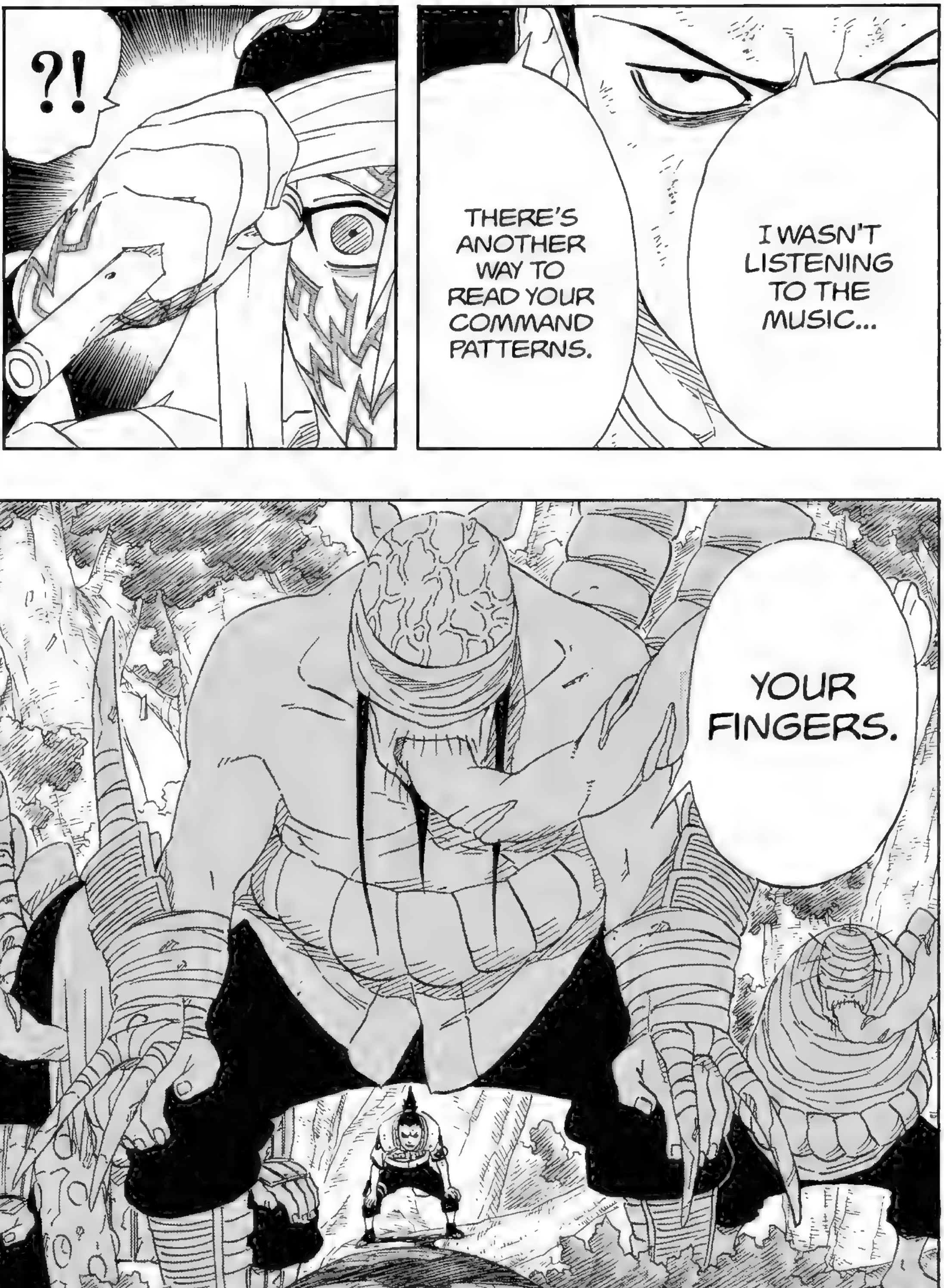

SHUNG
SPING
TSK!
THUNK
A PLOY TO CONCEAL HIS LOCATION...?!
STOP MESSING AROUND!!
SHF
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH


SCURRYING LIKE THAT...
WHAT'S HE UP TO?!
FWIP
SHUK
THE MOST INTERESTING RULE IN CHESS IS...
TAK
!!


POSH
SWPT
...ONCE YOU GET YOUR OPPONENT'S PAWNS, THEY BECOME YOURS TO COMMAND.
SSH
...FLASH?!
?!
OH, NO!! HE'S USING THE LIGHT FROM THE FLASH TO EXTEND SHADOWS...


KAGEMANE NO JUTSU! SHADOW POSSESSION TECHNIQUE!!
ZUNG
ZUNG
ZUNG
...
NO WAY... HOW DID YOU READ THEIR MOVES?!
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO FIGURE OUT THE PATTERN IN MY MUSIC...!

READ THIS WAY


I WASN'T LISTENING TO THE MUSIC...
THERE'S ANOTHER WAY TO READ YOUR COMMAND PATTERNS.
?!
YOUR FINGERS.

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY: A STORY TOO EMBARRASSING TO WRITE DOWN, PART 2

FOR THE ALMOST ONE YEAR I DECIDED TO IDENTIFY MYSELF WITH VULPANTHER, I ENCOUNTERED MANY DIFFICULTIES. VULPANTHER IS YELLOW. BOTTOM LINE, HE'S SYMBOLIZED BY THE COLOR YELLOW! SO, WHENEVER I HAD TO CHOOSE A COLOR, I CHOSE YELLOW! ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING HAD TO BE YELLOW!

VULPANTHER WORE A YELLOW JACKET SO, OF COURSE, I WORE YELLOW CLOTHES. BUT... THE YELLOW CLOTHES LOOKED WORSE THAN I THOUGHT.

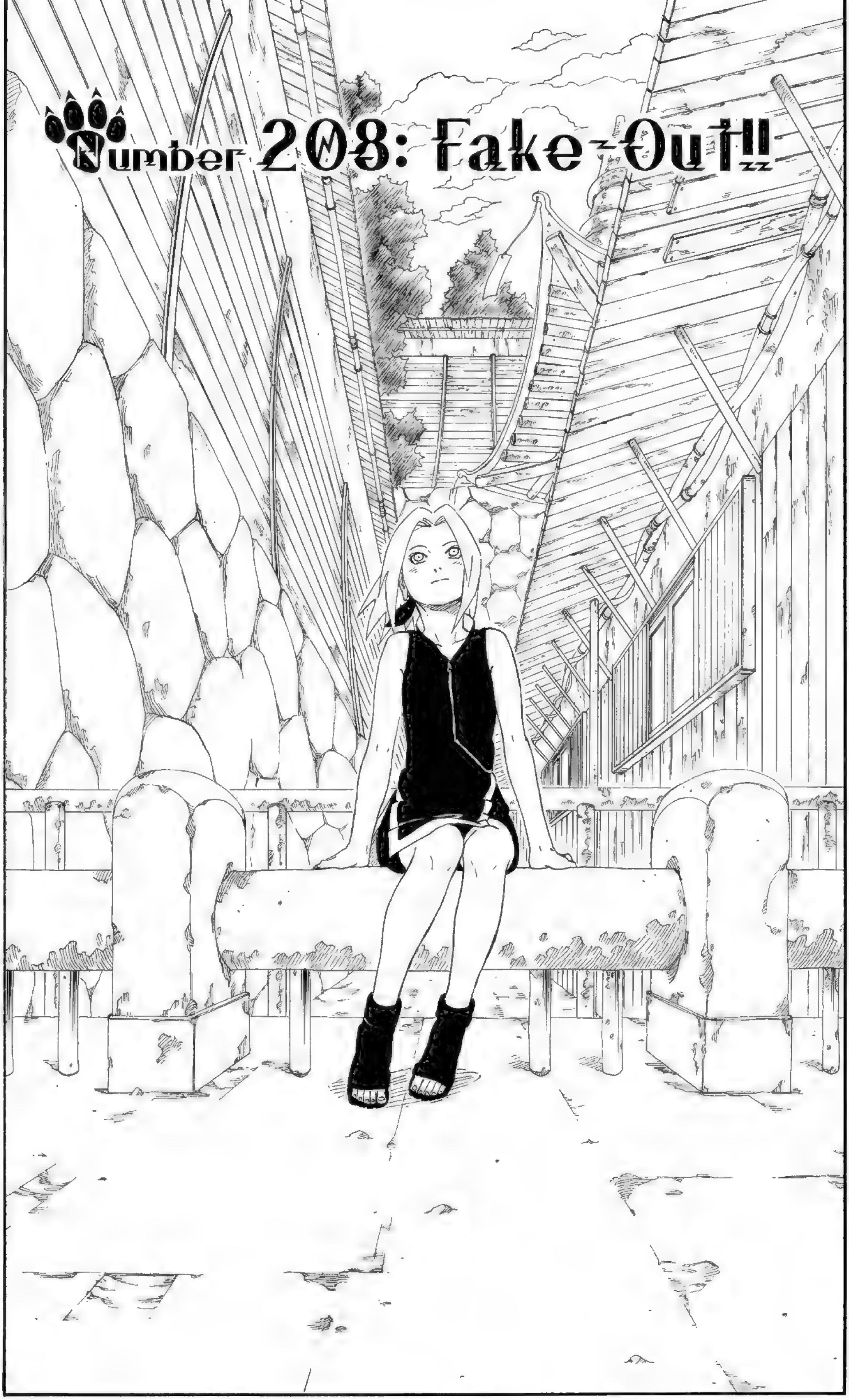
VULPANTHER IS [SYMBOLIZED BY] CURRY. BOTTOM LINE, HE LOVES CURRY AND RICE! SO, EVERY TIME SOMEONE ASKED ME, "WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE FOOD?" OF COURSE I ANSWERED "CURRY AND RICE!" ... FOR SOME REASON, IN THIS KIND OF SENTAI SERIES, MANY CHARACTERS WHOSE SYMBOLIC COLOR WAS YELLOW LIKED CURRY AND RICE. THE YELLOW RANGER OF THE GO RANGERS (MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS IN ENGLISH) WAS NO EXCEPTION.

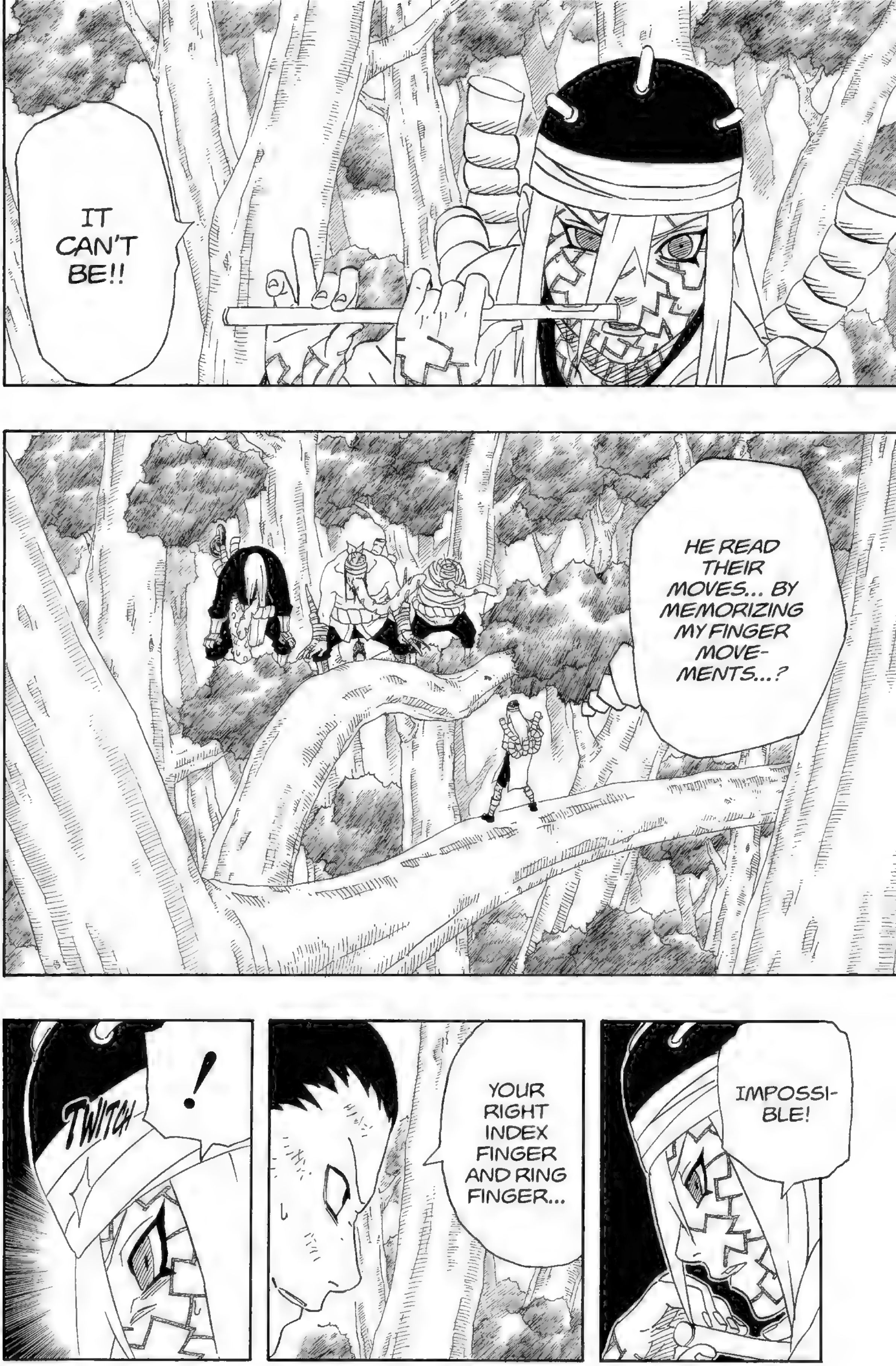
VULPANTHER IS A CHARACTER THAT EATS TONS OF CURRY AND RICE AND ALWAYS ASKS FOR SECONDS. HE PILES UP PLATES ONE AFTER ANOTHER, EATING AS FAST AS WANKO SOBA SPEED-EATERS. AS FAR AS I CAN REMEMBER, HE WOULD PILE UP ABOUT 20 PLATES. BASICALLY, ONE LOOK AT HIM REVEALED CLEARLY THAT HE LOVED CURRY AND RICE.

SO YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW EXCITED I GOT ON DAYS WHEN CURRY AND RICE WAS SERVED FOR DINNER!! A WANNABE VULPANTHER DEFINITELY HAD TO ASK FOR SECONDS NO MATTER WHAT, EVEN WHEN HE FELT LIKE THROWING UP OR THAT HIS STOMACH WAS GOING TO BURST. THEN I WOULD SAY TO MY MOTHER, "SECONDS, PLEASE! NEXT PLATE!" MY MOTHER WOULD SAY, "...? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! IF YOU WANT SECONDS, PUT IT ON THE SAME PLATE YOU HAVE NOW!! NO NEED TO DIRTY ANOTHER PLATE!!" I THOUGHT, "...CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT..."

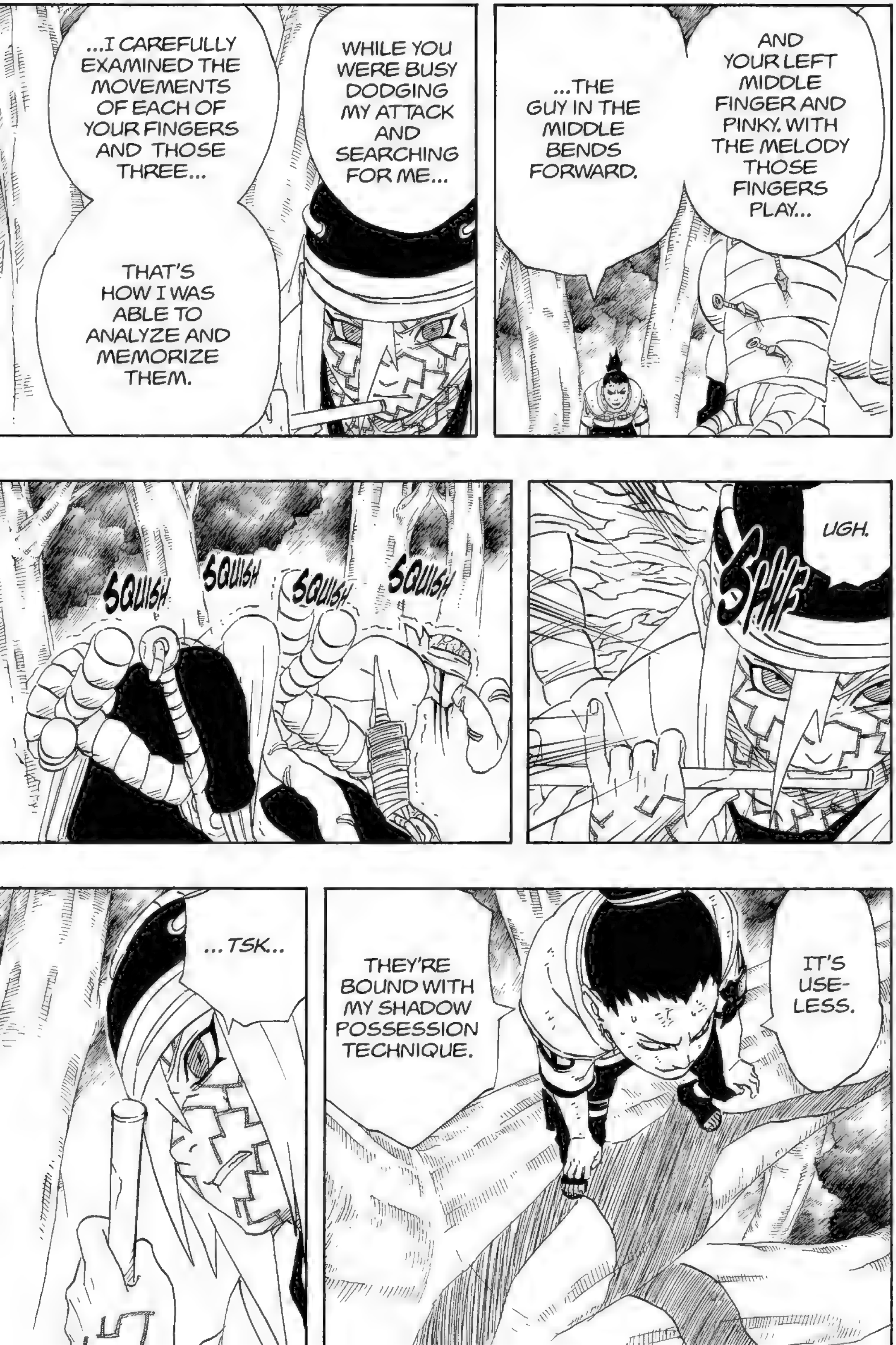
VULPANTHER ALSO CLIMBS WALLS. HE HAS SHARP CLAWS AND CAN CLIMB NO MATTER WHAT, EVEN IF THE WALL IS PERPENDICULAR TO THE GROUND! OF COURSE, I HAD TO CLIMB ANY PERPENDICULAR WALL I SAW WHEN PLAYING SUN VULCAN. ...EVEN I, AS A FIRST GRADER, KNEW THAT NO ONE COULD CLIMB A PERPENDICULAR WALL. BUT, IN FRONT OF VULEAGLE AND VULSHARK, I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO GO FOR IT. AS I RAN TOWARD THE WALL, I THOUGHT, "...HONESTLY, PLAYING VULPANTHER IS TOUGH..." JUMP!! AND SPLAT, I FLATTENED MYSELF AGAINST THAT WALL! SCRATCH! "OUCH!!" ...MY FINGERNAILS GOT TORN OFF. ...FROM THAT DAY FORWARD, I QUIT PLAYING VULPANTHER.

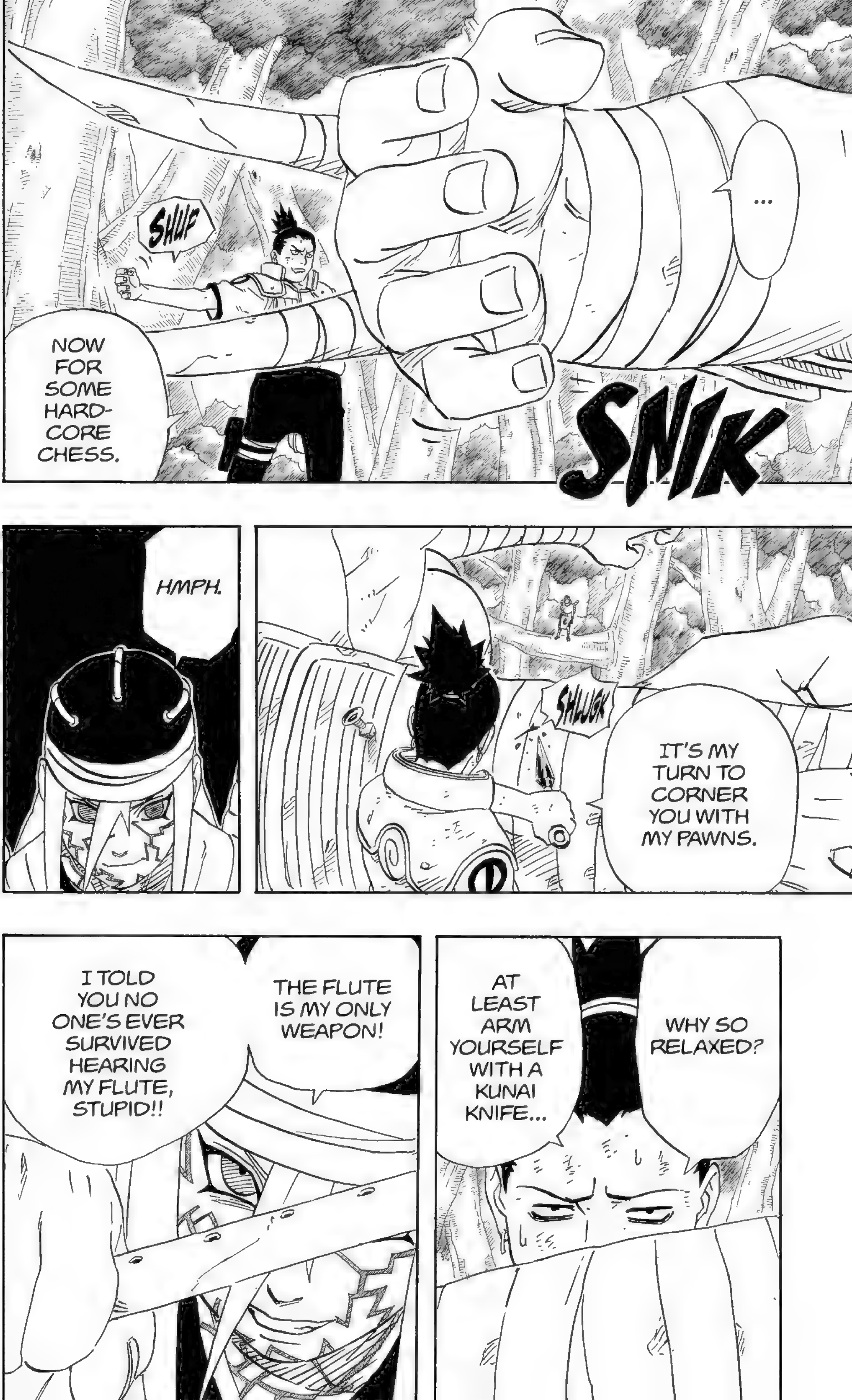
Number 208: Fake-Out!!



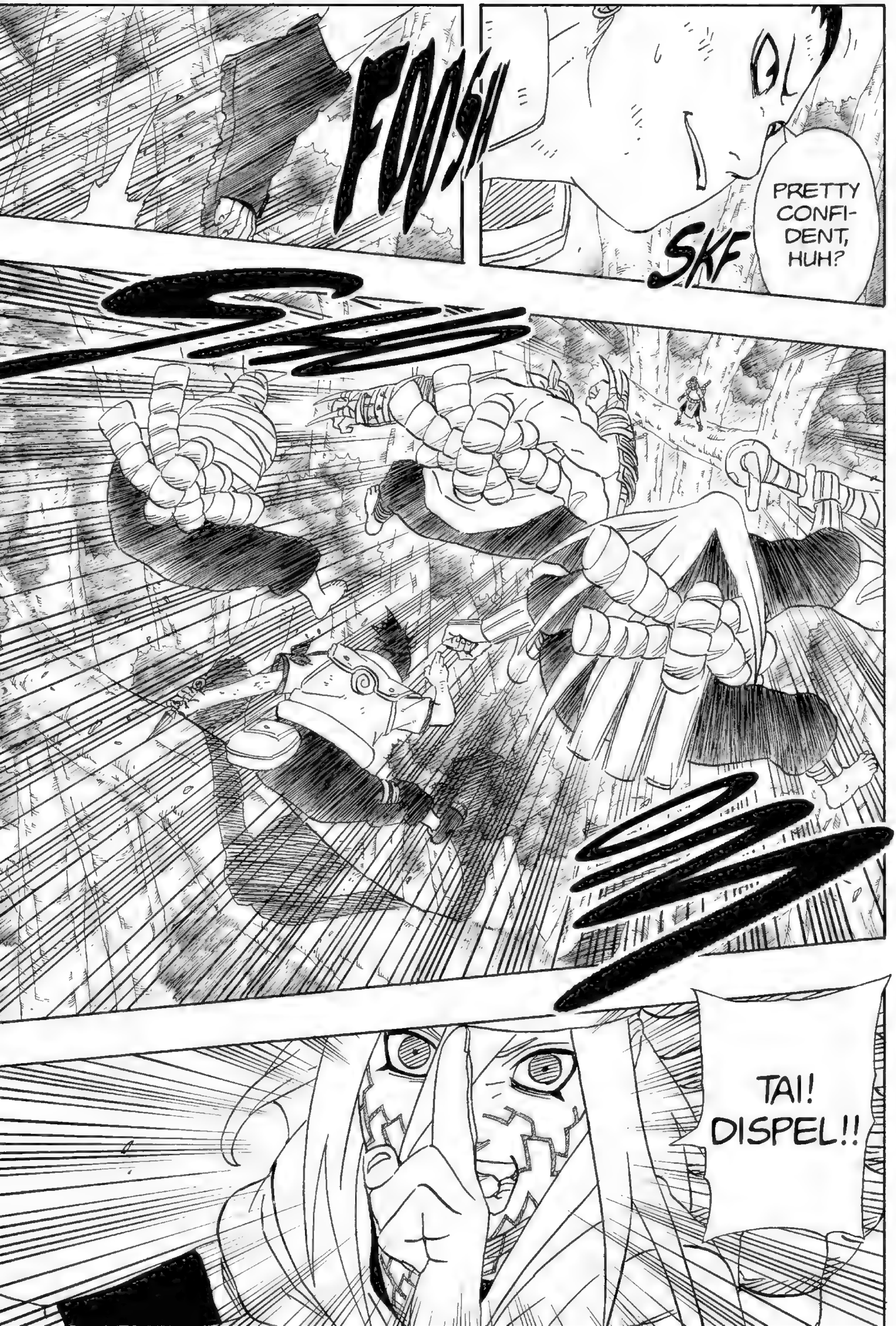

IT CAN'T BE!!
HE READ THEIR MOVES... BY MEMORIZING MY FINGER MOVEMENTS...?
IMPOSSIBLE!
YOUR RIGHT INDEX FINGER AND RING FINGER...
!
TWITCH

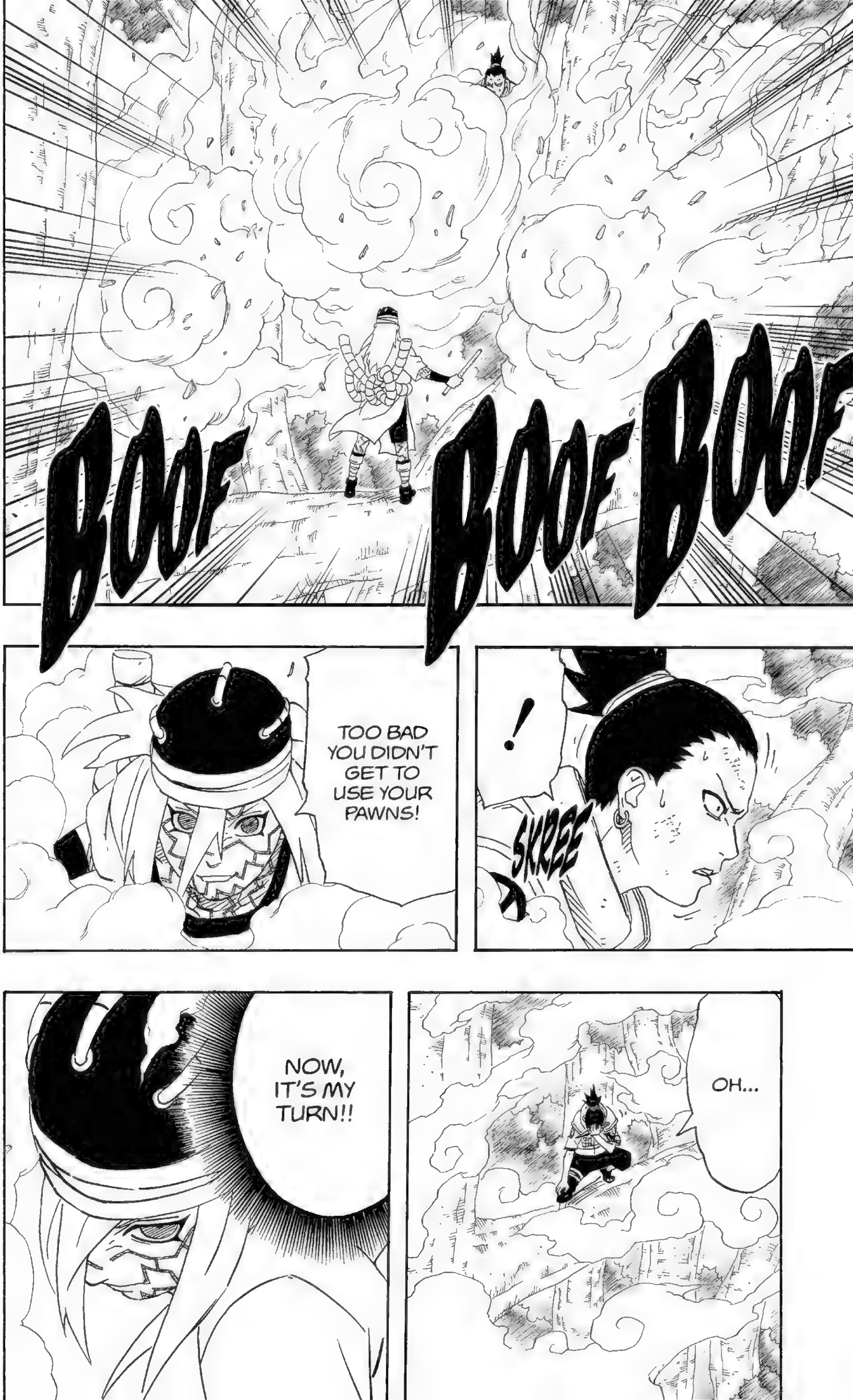
READ THIS WAY


AND YOUR LEFT MIDDLE FINGER AND PINKY. WITH THE MELODY THOSE FINGERS PLAY...
...THE GUY IN THE MIDDLE BENDS FORWARD.
WHILE YOU WERE BUSY DODGING MY ATTACK AND SEARCHING FOR ME...
...I CAREFULLY EXAMINED THE MOVEMENTS OF EACH OF YOUR FINGERS AND THOSE THREE...
THAT'S HOW I WAS ABLE TO ANALYZE AND MEMORIZE THEM.
UGH.
SHHF
SQUISH
SQUISH
SQUISH
SQUISH
IT'S USELESS.
THEY'RE BOUND WITH MY SHADOW POSSESSION TECHNIQUE.
...TSK...

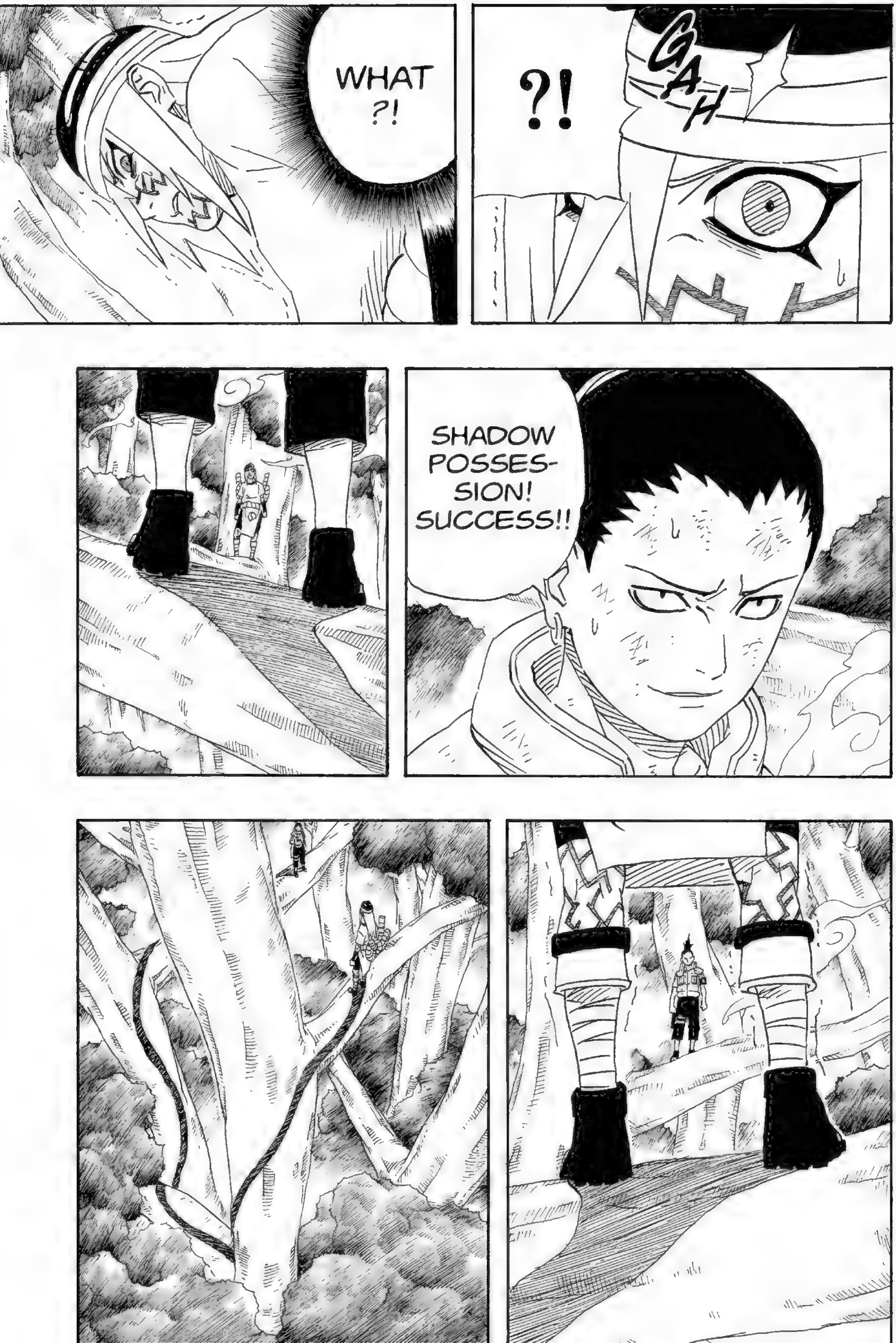

...
SHUF
NOW FOR SOME HARDCORE CHESS.
SNIK
SHLUCK
IT'S MY TURN TO CORNER YOU WITH MY PAWNS.
HMPH.
WHY SO RELAXED?
AT LEAST ARM YOURSELF WITH A KUNAI KNIFE...
THE FLUTE IS MY ONLY WEAPON!
I TOLD YOU NO ONE'S EVER SURVIVED HEARING MY FLUTE, STUPID!!

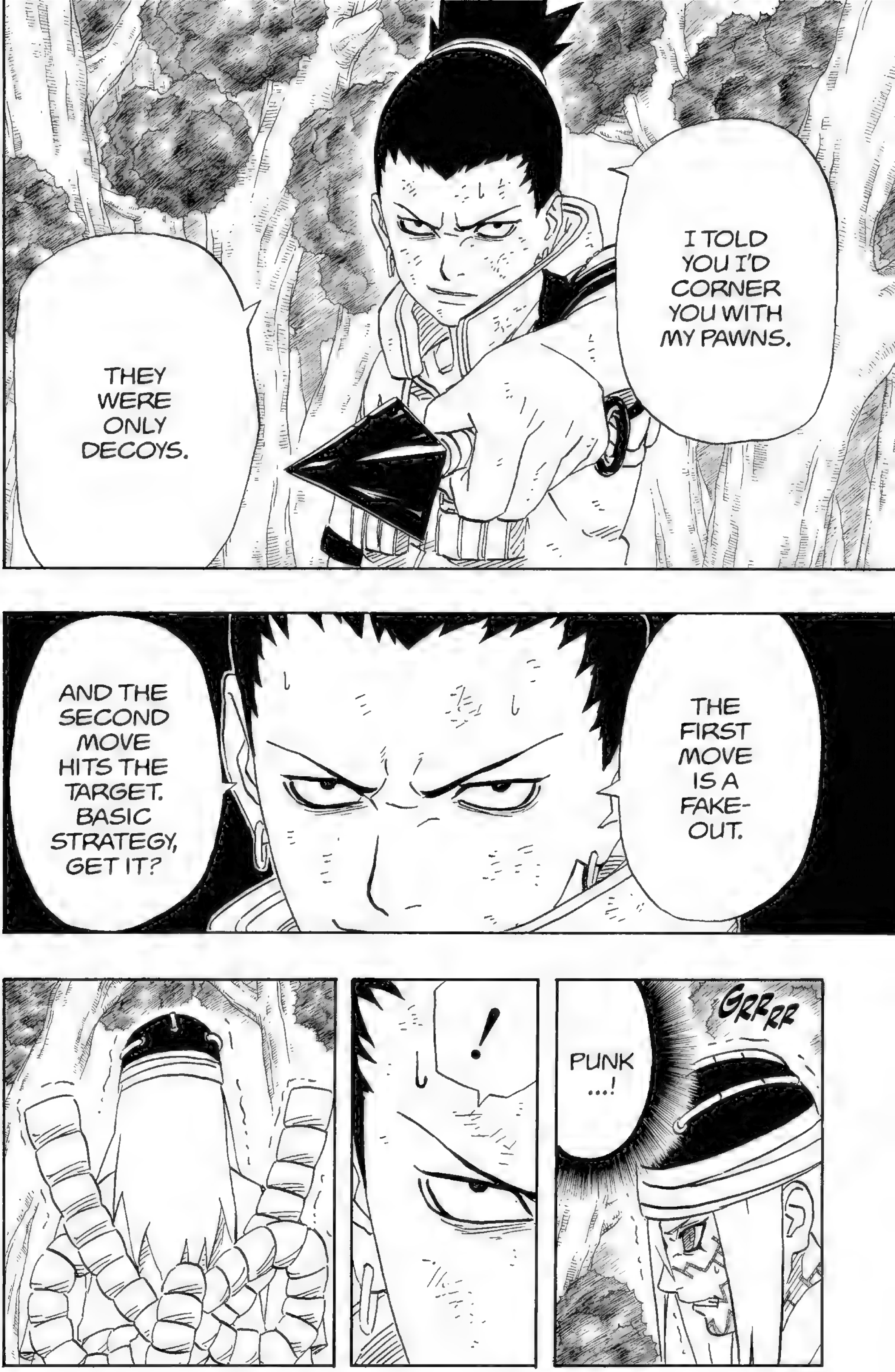
READ THIS WAY

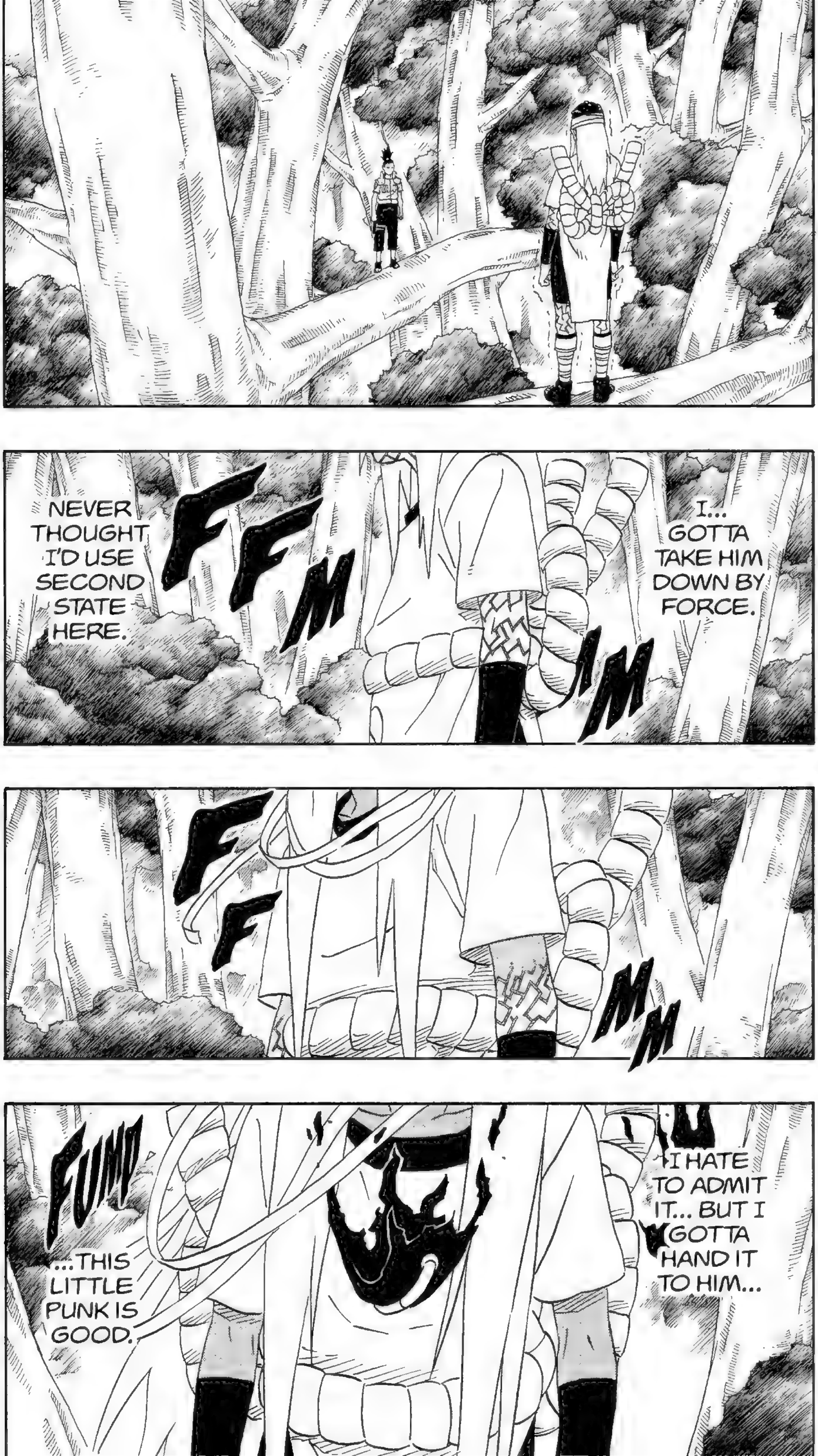

PRETTY CONFIDENT, HUH?
SKF
FOOSH
TAI! DISPEL!!

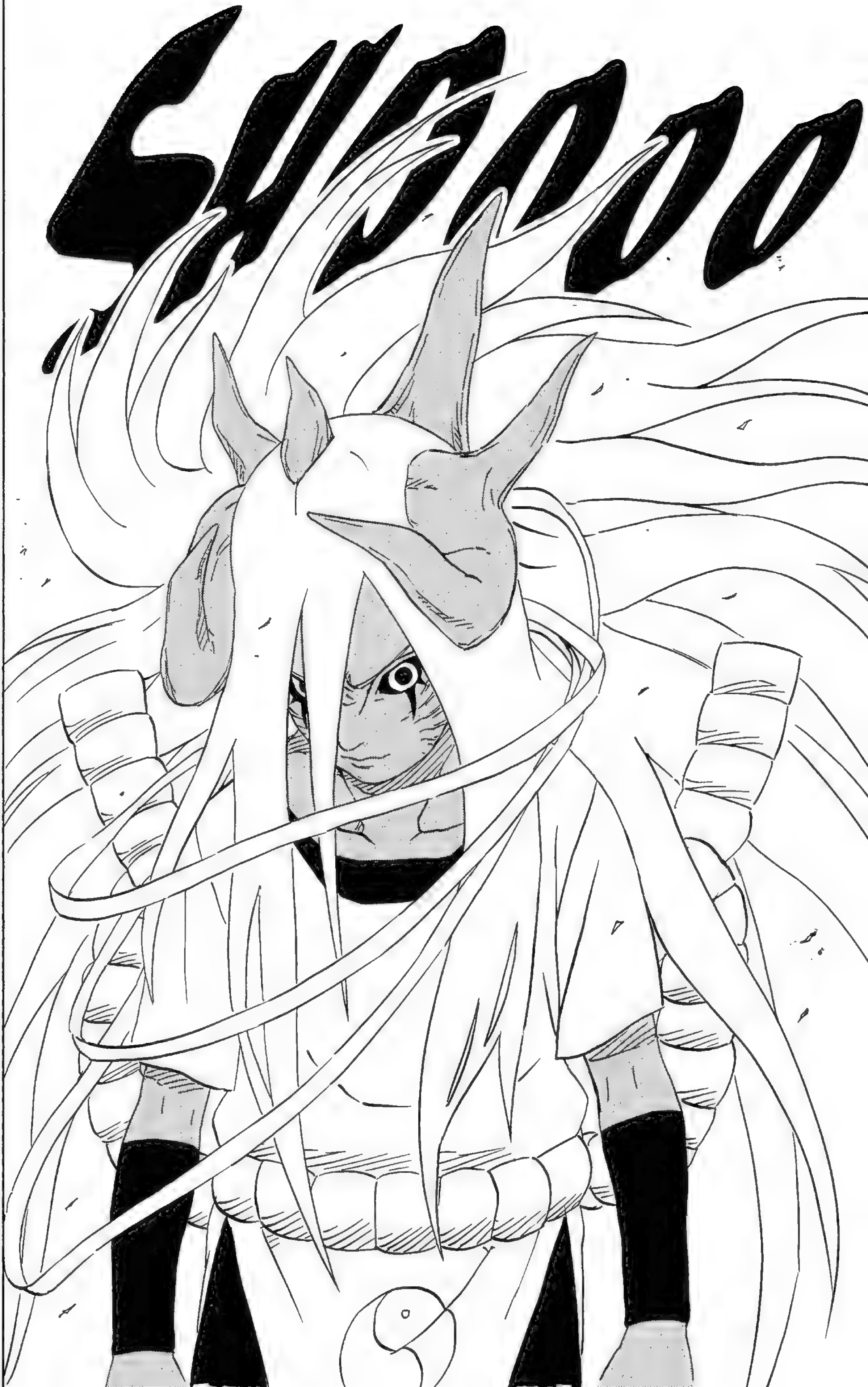

BOOF
BOOF
BOOF
TOO BAD YOU DIDN'T GET TO USE YOUR PAWNS!
!
SKREE
NOW, IT'S MY TURN!!
OH...

READ THIS WAY

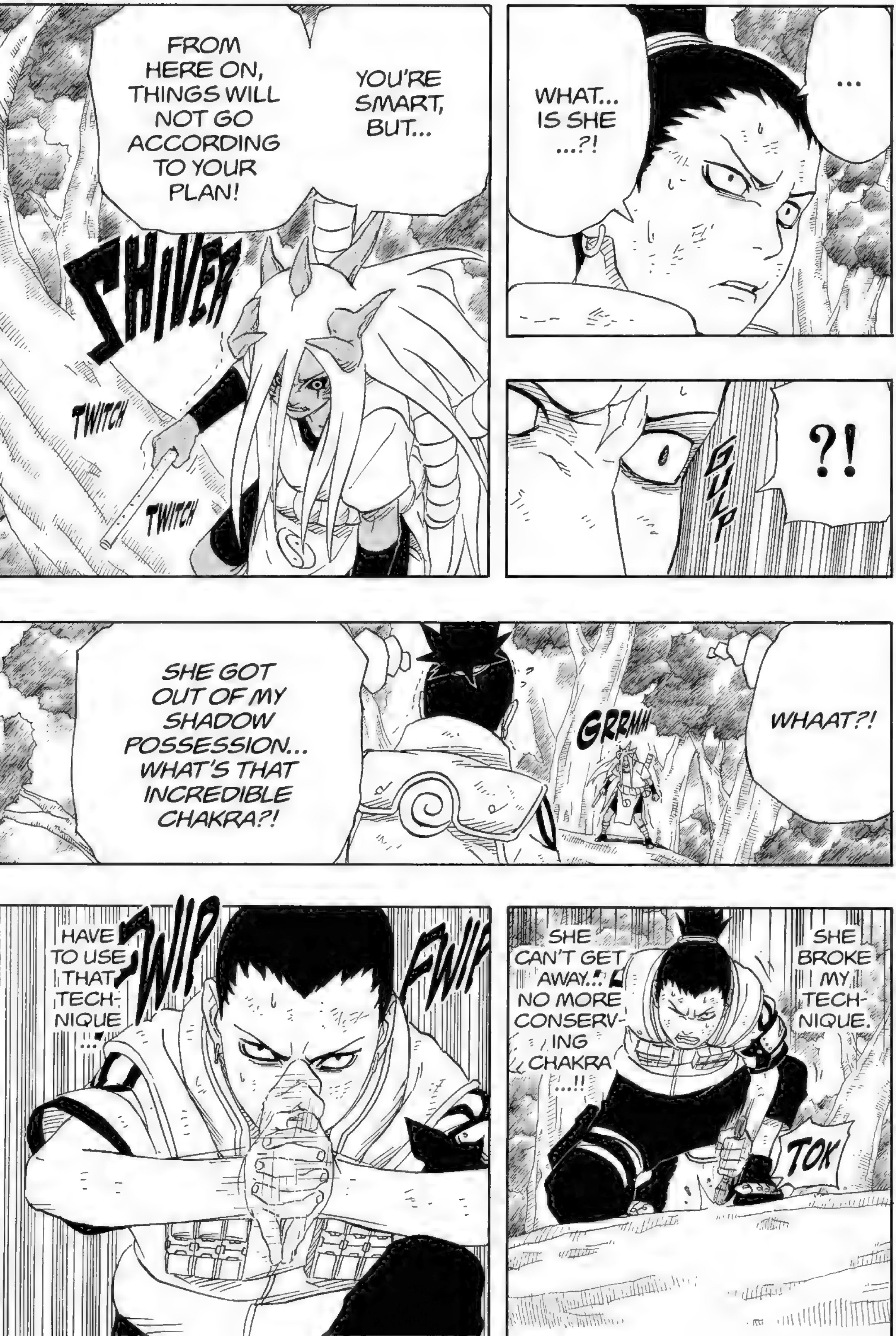

?!
GAH
WHAT ?!
SHADOW POSSESSION! SUCCESS!!

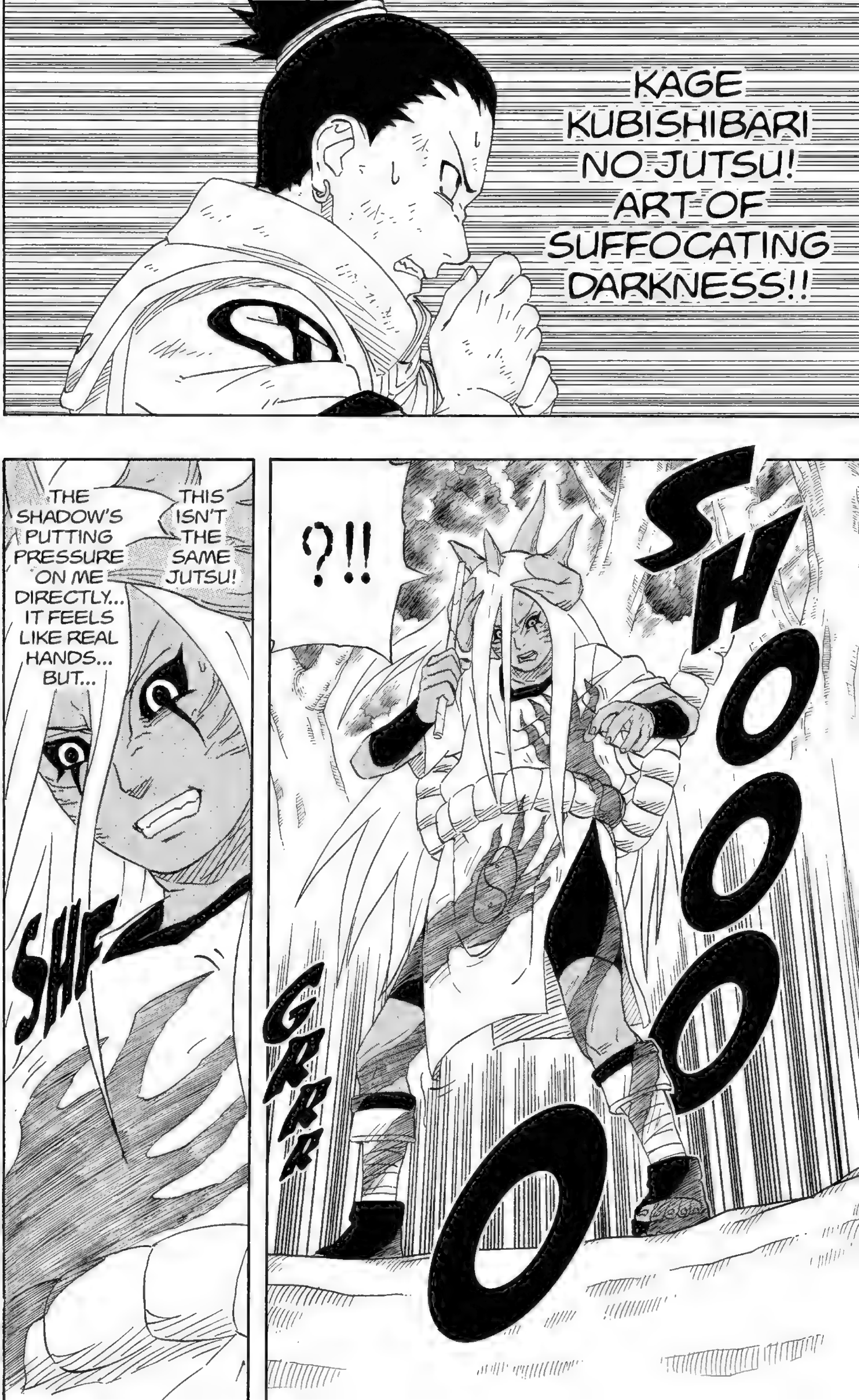

I TOLD YOU I'D CORNER YOU WITH MY PAWNS.
THEY WERE ONLY DECOYS.
THE FIRST MOVE IS A FAKE-OUT.
AND THE SECOND MOVE HITS THE TARGET. BASIC STRATEGY, GET IT?
GRRRR
PUNK ...!
!


I... GOTTA TAKE HIM DOWN BY FORCE.
NEVER THOUGHT I'D USE SECOND STATE HERE.
FFM
MM
FF
MM
I HATE TO ADMIT IT... BUT I GOTTA HAND IT TO HIM...
...THIS LITTLE PUNK IS GOOD.
FUMP

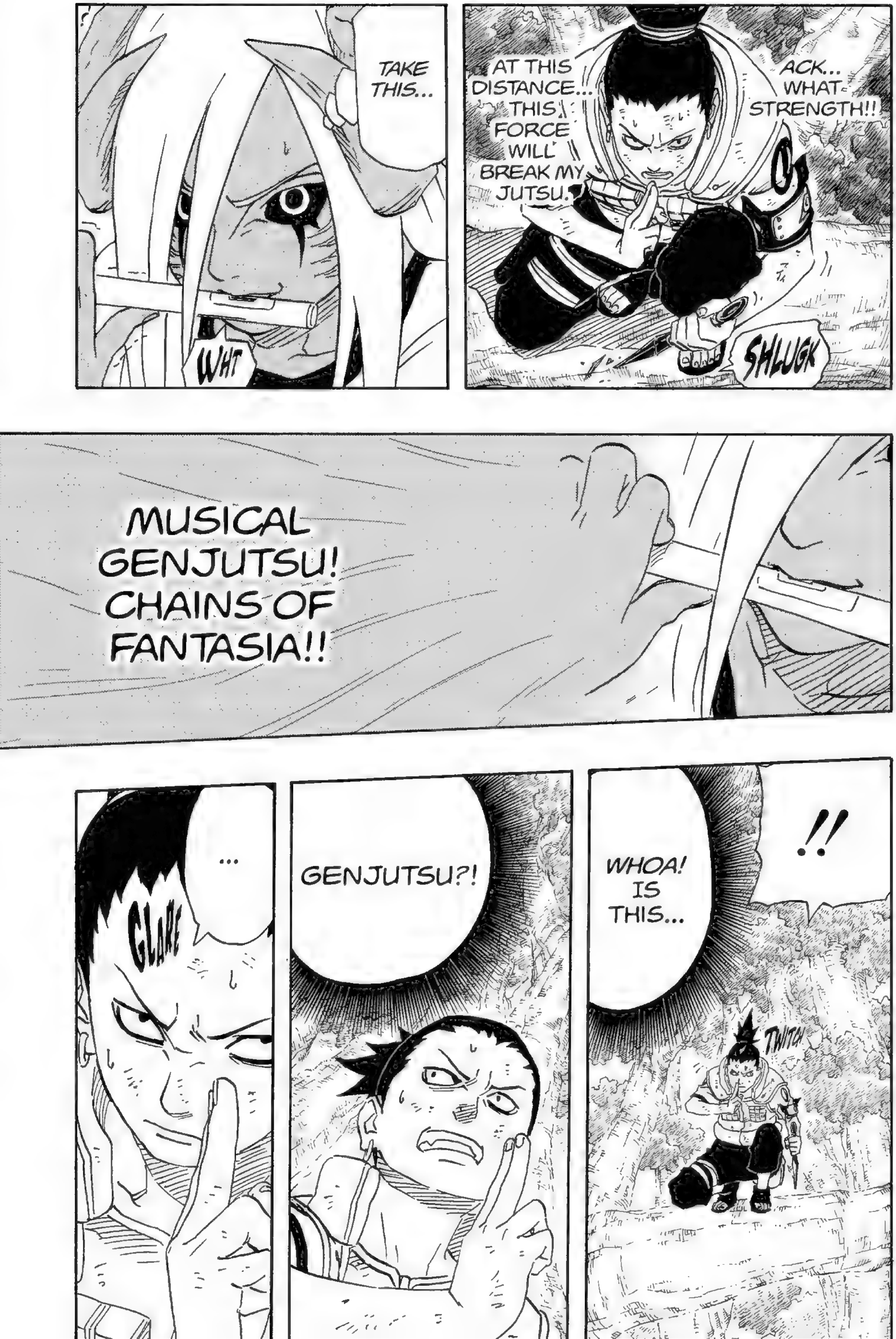

SHOOOO

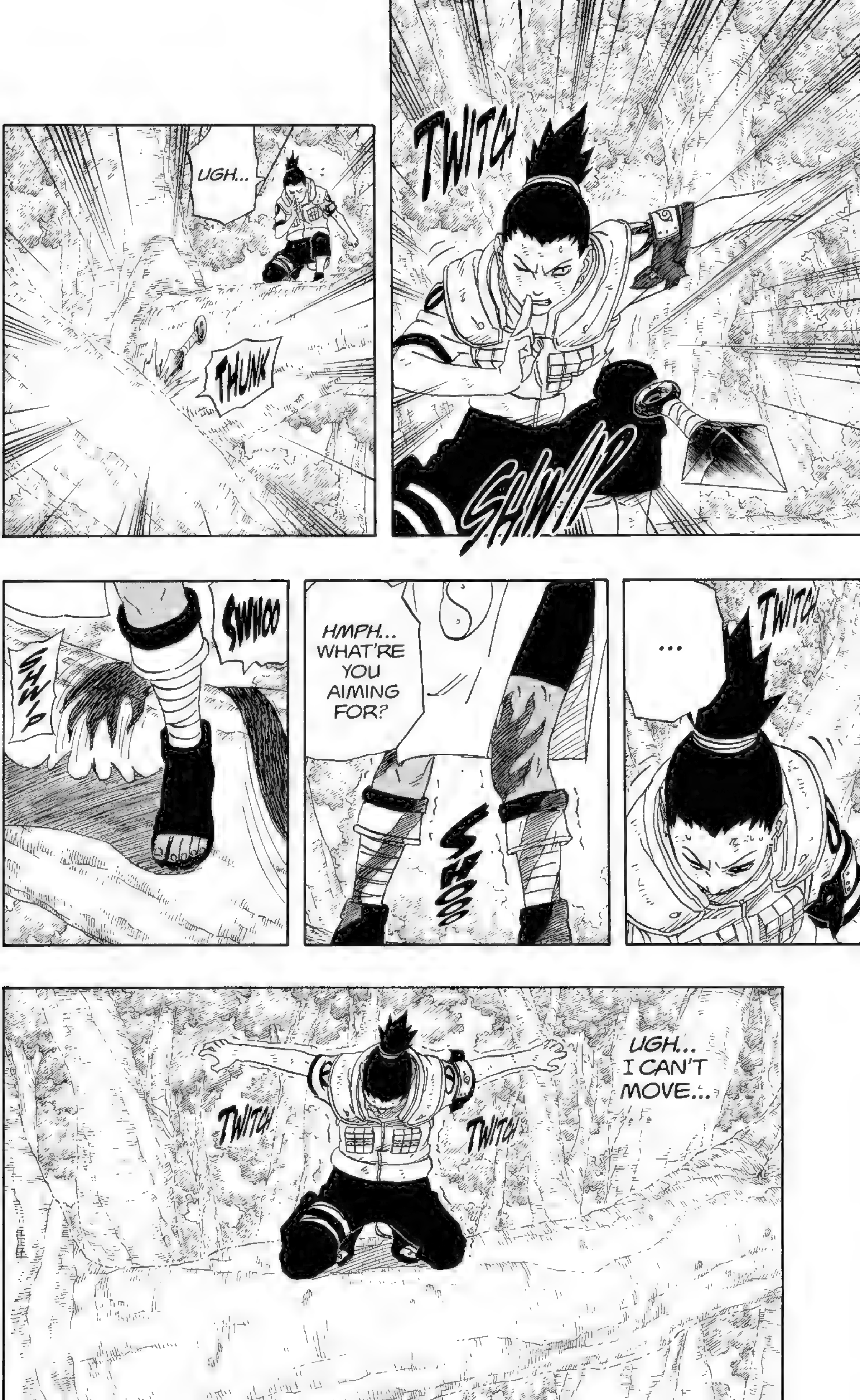
READ THIS WAY


...
WHAT... IS SHE ...?!
?!
GULP
YOU'RE SMART, BUT...
FROM HERE ON, THINGS WILL NOT GO ACCORDING TO YOUR PLAN!
SHIVER
TWITCH
TWITCH
WHAAT?!
GRRMM
SHE GOT OUT OF MY SHADOW POSSESSION... WHAT'S THAT INCREDIBLE CHAKRA?!
SHE BROKE MY TECHNIQUE.
SHE CAN'T GET AWAY...! NO MORE CONSERVING CHAKRA...!!
TOK
FWIP
SWIP
HAVE TO USE THAT TECHNIQUE...

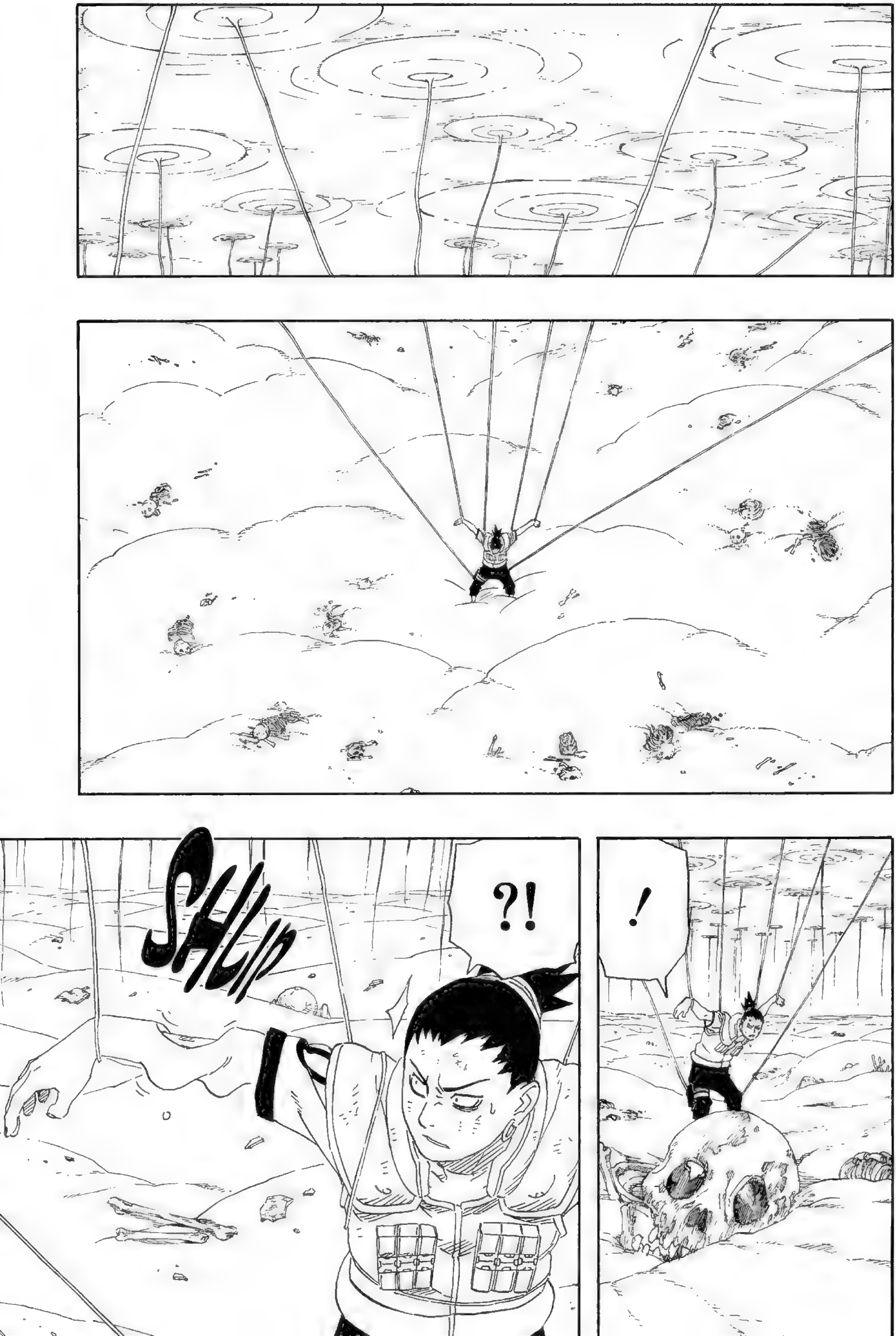

KAGE KUBISHIBARI NO JUTSU! ART OF SUFFOCATING DARKNESS!!
?!!
SHOOOOOO
GRRR
THIS ISN'T THE SAME JUTSU!
THE SHADOW'S PUTTING PRESSURE ON ME DIRECTLY... IT FEELS LIKE REAL HANDS... BUT...
SHF

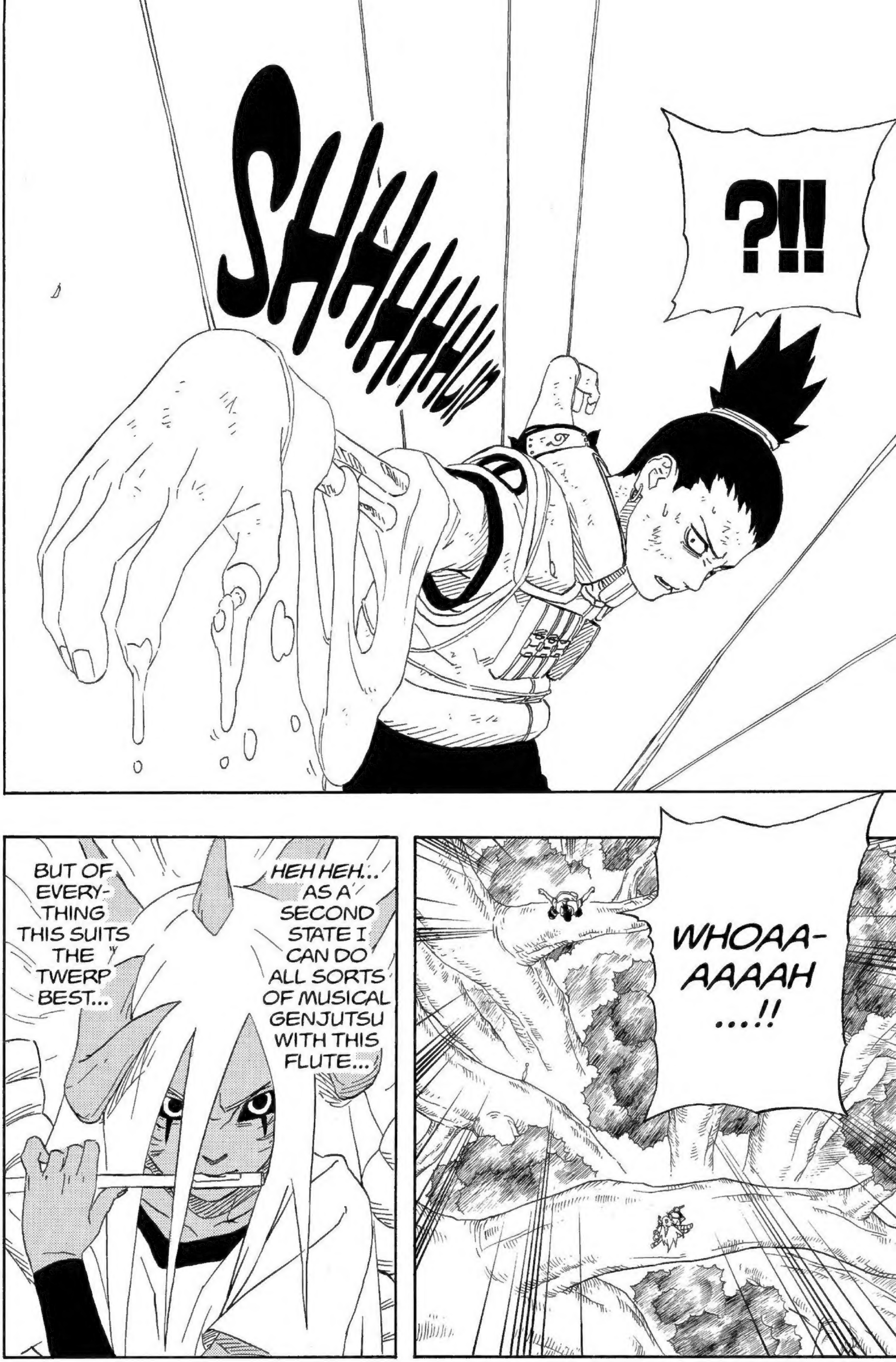
READ THIS WAY


ACK... WHAT STRENGTH!!
AT THIS DISTANCE... THIS FORCE WILL BREAK MY JUTSU.
SHLUGK
TAKE THIS...
WHT
MUSICAL GENJUTSU! CHAINS OF FANTASIA!!
!!
WHOA! IS THIS...
TWITCH
GENJUTSU?!
...
GLARE

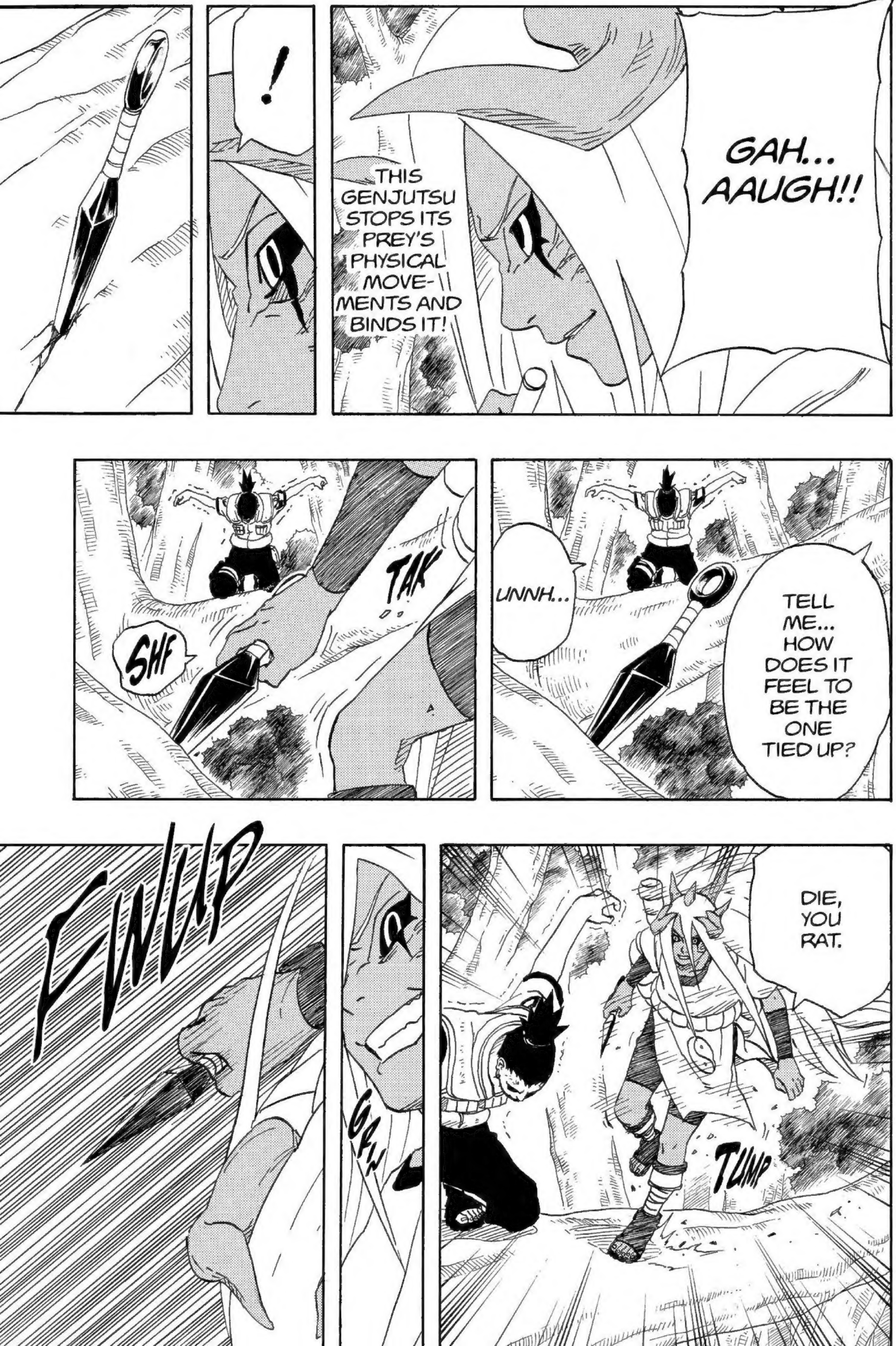

TWITCH
SHWIP
UGH...
THUNK
TWITCH
...
HMPH... WHAT'RE YOU AIMING FOR?
SHOOO
SWHOO
SHWIP
UGH... I CAN'T MOVE...
TWITCH
TWITCH

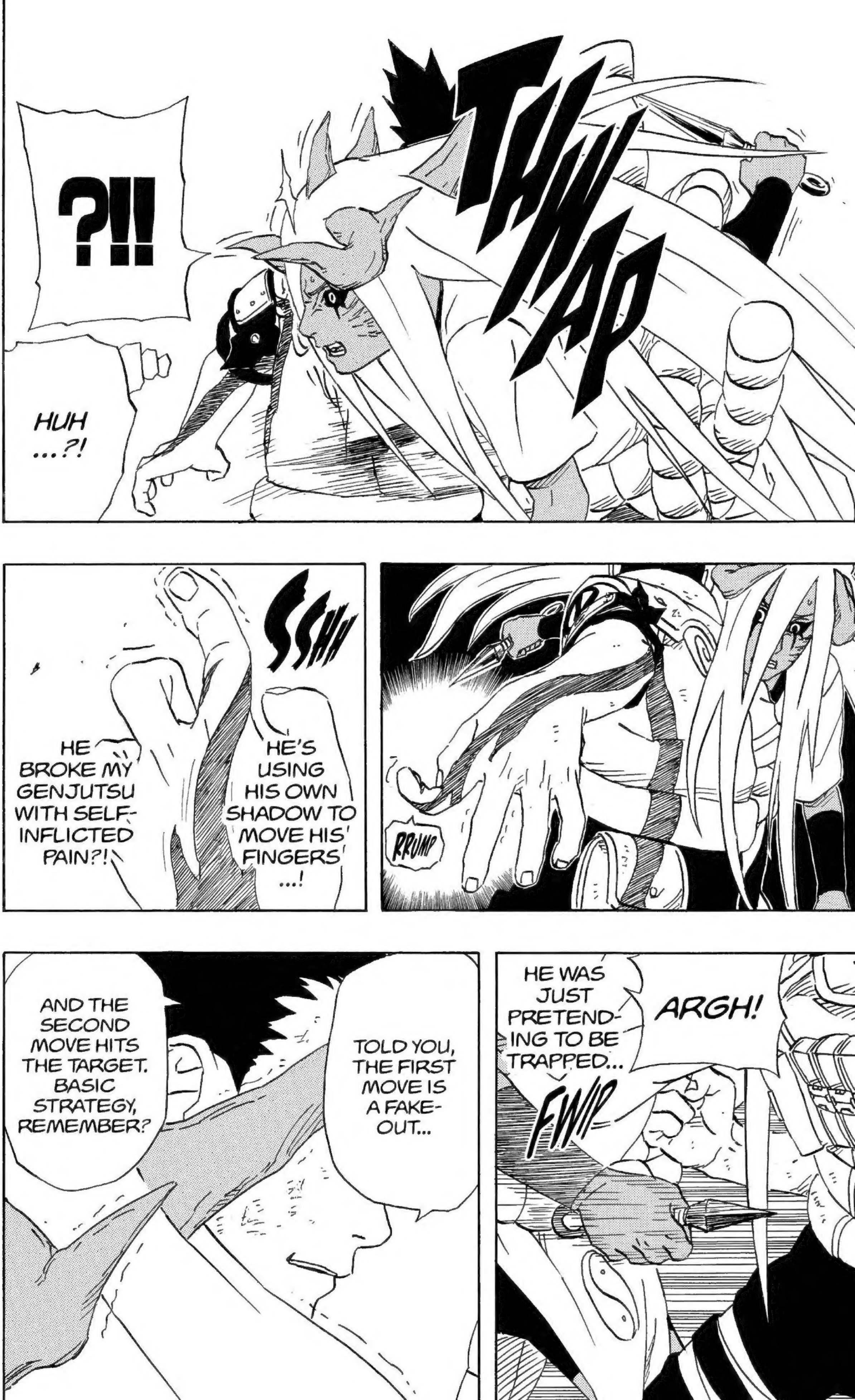
READ THIS WAY

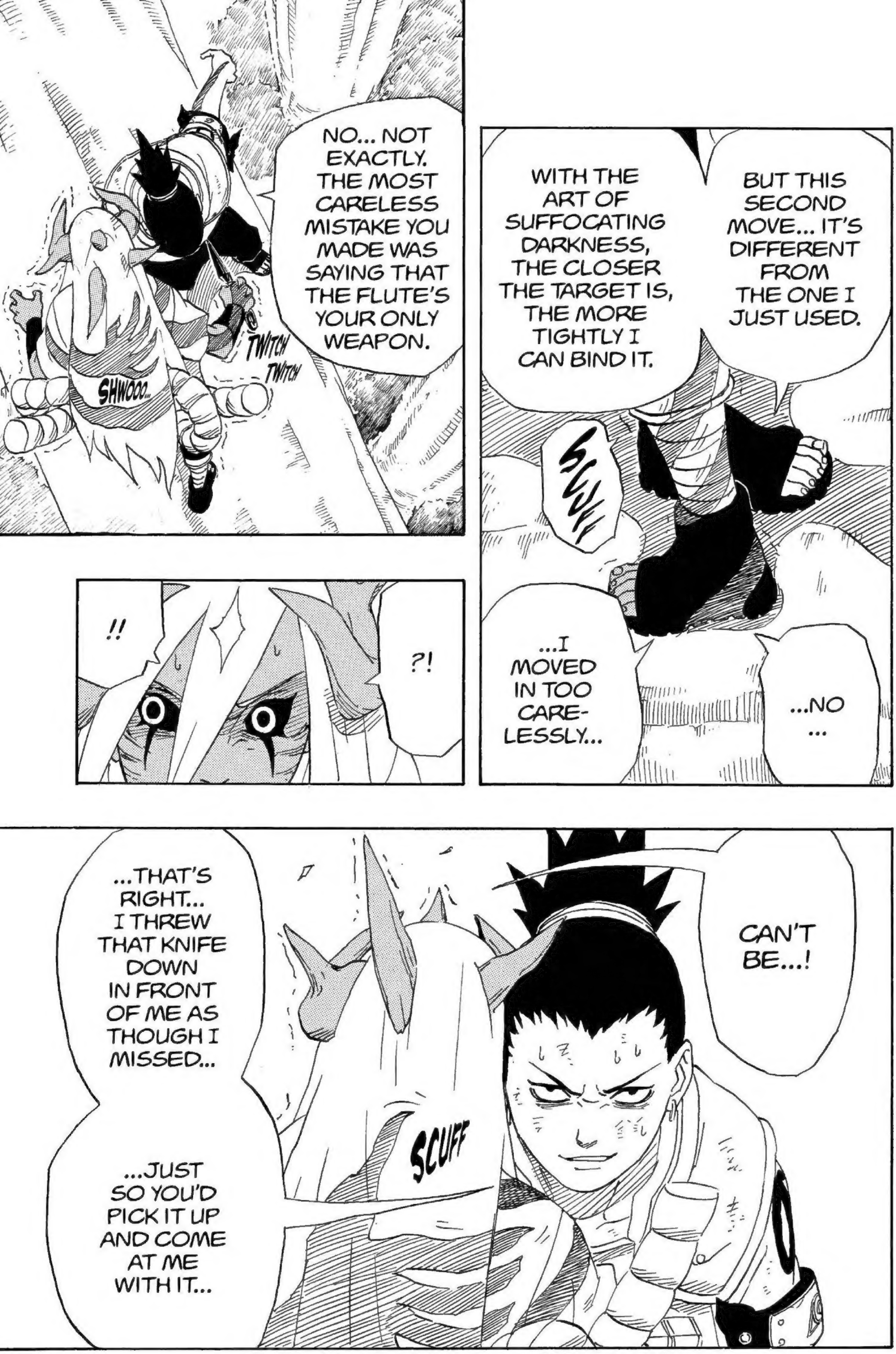



SHHHHLIP
?!!
WHOAA-AAAAH ...!!
HEH HEH... AS A SECOND STATE I CAN DO ALL SORTS OF MUSICAL GENJUTSU WITH THIS FLUTE...
BUT OF EVERYTHING THIS SUITS THE TWERP BEST...

READ THIS WAY


GAH... AAUGH!!
THIS GENJUTSU STOPS ITS PREY'S PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS AND BINDS IT!
!
TELL ME... HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE THE ONE TIED UP?
UNNH...
TAK
SHF
DIE, YOU RAT.
TUMP
GRN
FWUP


THWAP
?!!
HUH ...?!
RRUMP
SSHH
HE'S USING HIS OWN SHADOW TO MOVE HIS FINGERS ...!
HE BROKE MY GENJUTSU WITH SELF-INFLICTED PAIN?!
ARGH!
HE WAS JUST PRETENDING TO BE TRAPPED...
FWIP
TOLD YOU, THE FIRST MOVE IS A FAKE-OUT...
AND THE SECOND MOVE HITS THE TARGET. BASIC STRATEGY, REMEMBER?


NO... NOT EXACTLY. THE MOST CARELESS MISTAKE YOU MADE WAS SAYING THAT THE FLUTE'S YOUR ONLY WEAPON.
TWITCH TWITCH
SHWOOO...
WITH THE ART OF SUFFOCATING DARKNESS, THE CLOSER THE TARGET IS, THE MORE TIGHTLY I CAN BIND IT.
BUT THIS SECOND MOVE... IT'S DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE I JUST USED.
SCUFF
!!
?!
...I MOVED IN TOO CARE-LESSLY...
...NO ...
...THAT'S RIGHT... I THREW THAT KNIFE DOWN IN FRONT OF ME AS THOUGH I MISSED...
...JUST SO YOU'D PICK IT UP AND COME AT ME WITH IT...
SCUFF
CAN'T BE...!

TO BE CONTINUED IN *NARUTO* VOL. 24!